New Statesman

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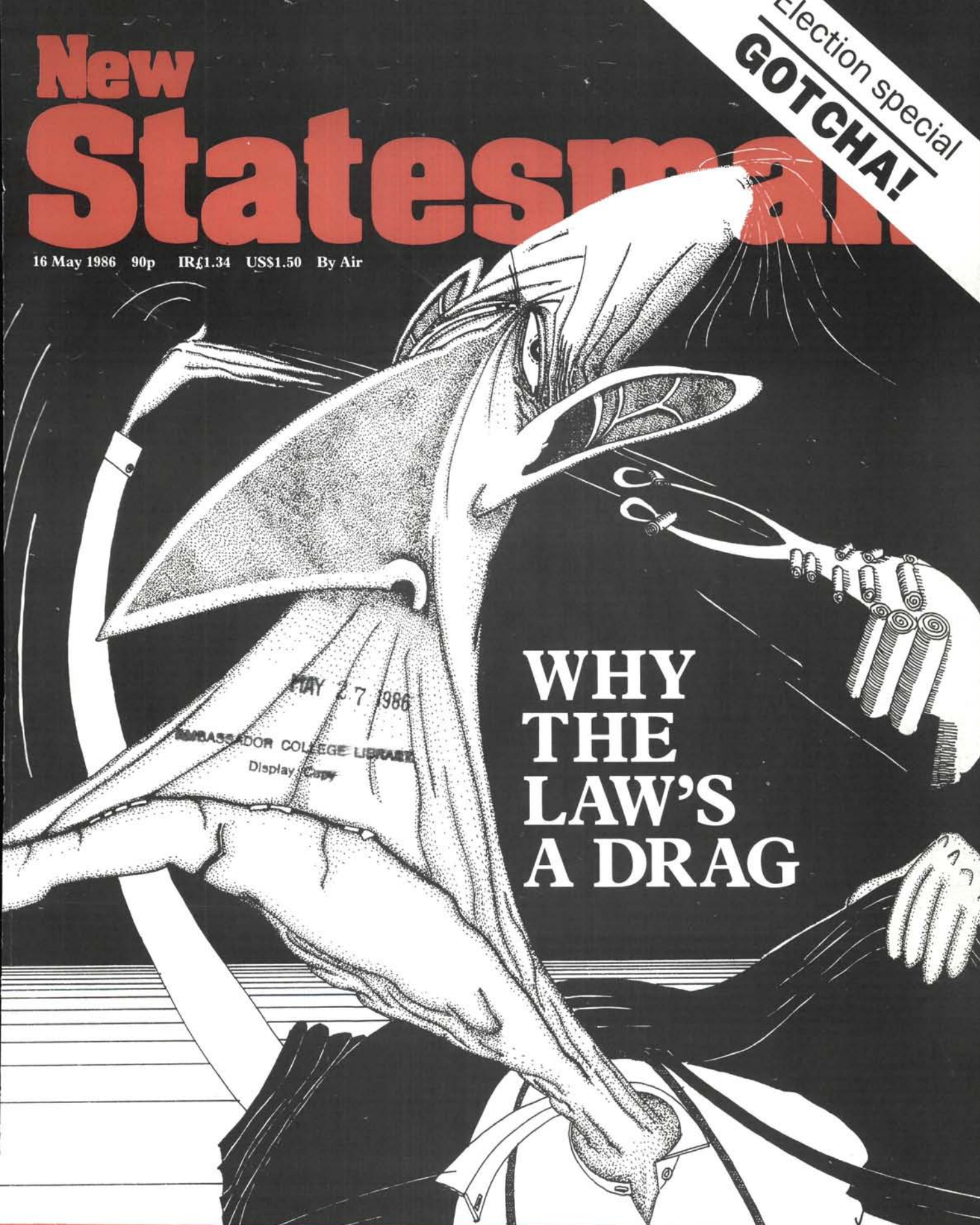

WHY THE LAW'S A DRAG

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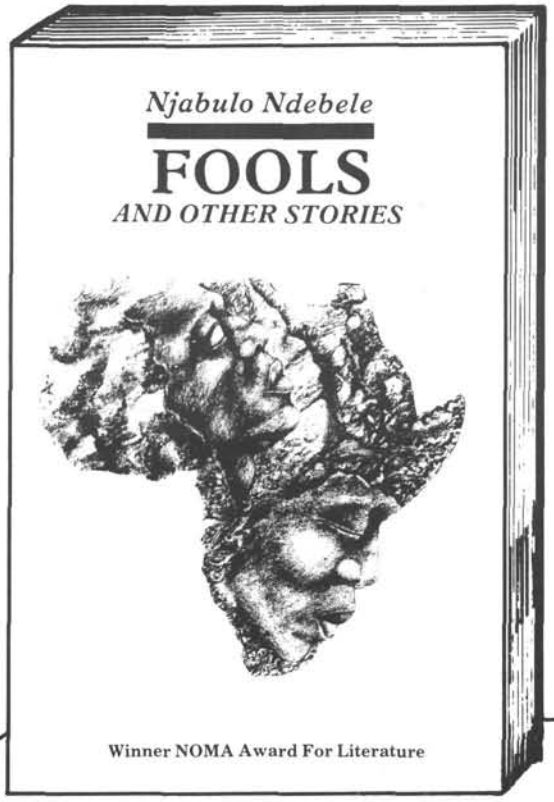

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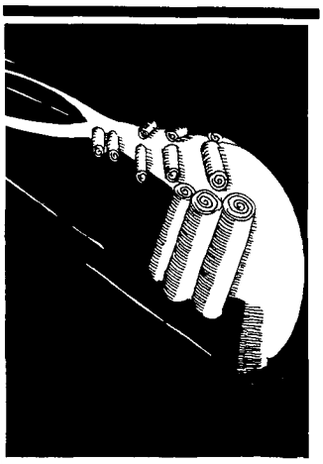

Cover drawing: Nick Maland

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A revolution is about to hit the comfy ways of lawyers, argues OLE HANSEN 10

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BLACK ARTS

From Aphra Behn to Stravinsky, Black culture has been woven into European arts — with a scant acknowledgement for its origins. KWESI OWUSU reviews the politics of cultural struggle

WASTREL REAGAN

Scientist JEREMY LEGGETT attacks Reagan and Thatcher for 'wasting a major opportunity' to cool the arms race

FICTION

Kathy Acker and Eva Figes are among the novelists reviewed by ADEWALE MAJA-PEARCE

OUR WAY

As Bernard Levin and Peter Ackroyd shout 'piffle' at the idea of gay culture, ANDREW LUMSDEN brings James M. Saslow's *Ganymede* down on their heads with a bang

New Statesman

Vol 111 No 2877 16 May 1986

Greener fields and pastures nuclear

NUCLEAR POWER in general and the Sellafield reprocessing plant in particular pose starkly for the Left the conflict between concern for the environment and concern for cheap energy, industry and employment. Labour's chief spokesperson on the *environment* made it absolutely clear this week on which side his bread is buttered, namely cheap energy, industry and employment. In the same debate on Tuesday, Labour's chief spokesperson on *energy*, however, made his priority clear, namely the environment.

Labour has a clear political problem over nuclear energy. It is made up of several factors. One is that John Cunningham, as environment spokesman, is now much more lively and articulate than Stan Orme, the energy spokesman. A second is that Cunningham has a thought out position on atomic energy and employment at Sellafield in his constituency, while neither Orme nor Labour have a thought out national energy policy. A third is that, while any rational energy policy for the next twenty years would clearly give a greatly enhanced role to coal, the Labour leadership does not want to go ape in public with a commitment that could be accused of putting the future of British industry back into the hands of Comrade Scargill and the NUM.

The compromise position on nuclear energy that the Shadow Cabinet worked out in time for this week's debate certainly served to cover most people's position — except, perhaps, Tony Benn's. Though even there the view that he has come to since being a pro-nuclear minister of technology and of energy conflicts in practice with the new official line more on the question of how fast nuclear power should be 'rolled back' than on the principle. But while the careful drafting of the Labour position allowed pro-nuclear Cunningham to put it forward in his own name and to declare ringingly that he was not going to pretend that he was 'all things to all people', the fact is that the new policy formulation is hoping precisely to be just that.

The only reason why the new policy just about holds water is that, given the Thatcherite recession and given what has turned out to be a grossly overoptimistic investment programme (including in nuclear plant) by the generating boards, we have such overcapacity for electricity generation that no government in its right mind would commission another power station of any kind for a long time. That allows the anti-nuclear faction to argue that the new policy will lead ineluctably to the 'phasing out' of nuclear energy; and it allows the Cunninghams of the Left to say that the option of nuclear power is not being 'ruled out'.

Curiously, the rhetorical position adopted by both Cunningham and Benn is equally unrealistic. The one fears and the other hopes that we could get out of the nuclear power business in double quick time. Even if that were government policy, in reality it is impossible. Existing Magnox power station exist. Shutting them down all at once would create a nuclear waste disposal problem of gigantic proportions. The Sellafield plant would be in the nuclear cleaning up and reprocessing business for years to come, even if the generating boards decided to go entirely 'non-nuclear' tomorrow — which they clearly will not.

Equally the government's defence of nuclear power is not based in reality. It argues that Britain needs nuclear energy in order for

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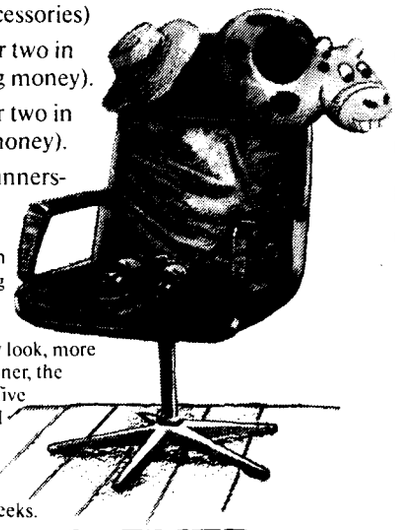

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are generally reckoned to be Crocker and Devenish of New Burlington Street. Such is the perfectionism of these skilled craftsmen, that both of them are involved in the cutting of each pair of trousers: Albert Crocker specialises in left legs, while his partner, Humphrey Devenish specialises in right legs. Since there is currently a twenty-five year waiting list for a suit, only those young gentlemen whose fathers were farsighted enough to put their names down at birth can hope to be considered as possible customers. Unless of course they are foreigners, in which case they will never be considered. There are two notable eccentricities about the establishment: in each of the fitting rooms there is a Harley-Davidson Electraglide motorcycle, so that the young blades can check the fit of their trousers while in the saddle, and all customers are offered a glass of Merrydown Vintage Cider while waiting to be measured. This cider is produced in limited quantities each year by a unique blending process, and each bottle bears the date of the vintage on its label. The apples used in the fermentation are all fine English apples like Bramleys and Cox's, rather than the bitter little cider apples used in other brands designed for those with more "off-the-peg" tastes. It is available in two subtly differing varieties; Merrydown Vintage and Merrydown Vintage Dry. Should you be inclined to sample either, you should find that a reputable off-licence will come up with the goods even more promptly than your tailor.

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industry to remain competitive with, for example, France — which is the only Western industrial country still to be crashing ahead with a major nuclear plant construction programme. But, if this government was really interested in a policy of cheap energy for industry, it could have had one. North Sea oil and gas, domestic coal (and even more, imported coal) could have been used to ensure that British industry operated with basic energy costs below any in Europe.

Instead the government insisted that the price of electricity be pushed up in order, in effect, to use a nationalised industry to collect money from industry and the public in place of taxes, or to finance tax cuts. Meanwhile 'market forces' were enthusiastically encouraged to do what they liked with North Sea Oil and gas at whatever price and at whatever depletion rate they chose.

Labour in fact would be in a strong position to begin the process of phasing out nuclear power in this country. The main motivation for the nuclear power programme since the very beginning has been the production of weapons grade plutonium for the military. The renunciation of the bomb would remove that persistent and secret pressure.

Then all plans for new generation pressure water or fast breeder reactors should be cancelled and the existing Magnox stations phased out as soon as is practical. The Thorp extention at Sellafield should be cancelled and the nuclear work in the Cunningham constituence would slowly wind down over the next decade or so. John Cunningham, himself, should be promoted to pastures new. □

Alone at the top

IN TERMS of close political friendships, Mrs Thatcher must now be the loneliest Prime Minster since Ramsay Mac. Those wets that she has kept at court are, of course, daily delighted that her hubris has caught her up. But those who are *now* putting in the boot are those who over all these years have counted squarely and safely as being 'one of us'.

Norman Tebbit, after all, was put into Employment to do for the unions, because Jim Prior was being such a pussyfooter. John Biffen was made Chief Secretary to the Treasury from the start because She did not trust the shadow Treasury team that she inherited, made up of Heathites and Keynsians like Geoffrey Howe and Nigel Lawson.

The old hands who remain loyal, at least in public, do not do so because they think she is right, but because they like for personal reasons to be kept on as loyal old hands. That applies particularly to Lords Hailsham and Whitelaw, who enjoy the old-people's-luncheon-club facilities of the House of Lords. Hailsham's life would have been desperately lonely, if he had actually been forced to give up being Lord Chancellor, though now that he has married again perhaps he would accept retirement. Whitelaw clearly enjoys being something called deputy prime minister. Her old mentor, Sir Keith, remains loyal, but must need as much support these days as he can give.

But, as Peter Kellner argues on page 9, there is no real way for the Tory Party to get rid of her, so long as she really wants to stay. Harold Wilson quit suddenly while he was ahead — or at least not behind. Thatcher is behind and everyone knows it.

But unless she chooses to go voluntarily, under the system that the Tory Party finally adopted to choose both their last two leaders, she can only be ousted if someone puts up successfully against her in what would otherwise be her unopposed annual re-election as leader. And, as all ambitious Tories know, the owner of the hand that plunges the dagger is admired in private but castigated for disloyalty in public. The only one who got away with it was Thatcher herself in 1975, but Heath had then lost not one but two general elections in a row. So, happily at least for the electoral fortunes of the Opposition, we have got her with us for some time to come. □

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Lothian aghast as SSEB aims to fuel Torness

The newly-elected Labour administration of Lothian regional council is investigating how, in the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster, it might be able to stop the new nuclear power station at Torness in East Lothian from coming on stream. To have much hope of success it will have to move very quickly. ROB EDWARDS reports

IN A LETTER to the Scottish Campaign to Resist the Atomic Menace (SCRAM), the government's watchdog Nuclear Installations Inspectorate has said that uranium fuel will start being loaded into the first of the two reactors in the week beginning 7 July this year. Once fuel-loading and irradiation has commenced, it becomes technically and politically much more difficult to mothball the station, or convert it to coal, options being canvassed at the moment.

The fact that fuel-loading is due to start so soon has taken everyone concerned about Torness by surprise. The Labour MP for East Lothian, John Home Robertson, this week accused the South of Scotland Electricity Board (SSEB), of 'going ahead of schedule' in commissioning Torness. Along with all four district councils in Lothian and the regional Labour group, he believes it would be wise to pause while the alternatives to commissioning Torness are studied.

According to the leader of Lothian Labour group, John Mulvey, Chernobyl meant there should be a 'major rethink' about the wisdom of commissioning Torness. He said it would be in the region's economic and employment interests to convert Torness to coal and that they will be examining the feasibility of so doing.

Last week 200 people packed a public protest meeting in a hall in Dunbar, the town closest to Torness. The meeting overwhelmingly agreed to a vote of no confidence in the SSEB, who, true to form, had refused even to attend.

*

Hilary Wainwright adds:
Grassroots action against the British nuclear power programme is beginning to snowball. Women in mining communities of Wales, Durham and Derbyshire have linked up with CND groups and environmentalists to organise a week of action starting 7 June.

At a Durham conference on 12 May organised by the LINKS campaign they drew up a petition calling for a halt to the building of nuclear power stations and phasing out of existing ones by 1995, and immediate action to implement a 'sane and safe' energy policy based on coal, conservation and renewable energy sources.

The intention is for local groups throughout the country to petition and leaflet outside their electricity board show rooms.

Copies of the petition/leaflet and Action Packs are available from LINKS campaign, 26 The Avenue, Durham.

Can Lambeth stave off housing benefits disaster?

Lambeth's 40 new Labour councillors face an imminent collapse of the borough's housing benefit service, according to a confidential internal report passed to the *New Statesman*.

The borough's housing benefit system has been overstretched ever since it was first implemented three years ago. However, the report warns that not only is the situation becoming increasingly chaotic, but that 'emergency measures are required to prevent the collapse of housing benefits' in London.

Figures presented with the report, which was prepared by senior benefit staff, show that previous estimates of a backlog of 18,00 cases were optimistic. In fact, there are now 13,000 council tenants and 30,000 privately renting tenants who are waiting for their claims to be sorted out. This is costing the council lost interest on an estimated £2.5 million of rent and rates which tenants are unable to pay because they have not received their benefit. There is a further unknown sum lost in overpayments.

One type of benefit, Housing Benefit Supplement, which is paid to particularly poor tenants who have suffered under the controversial housing benefit scheme, is 'virtually' not being paid, according to the report. It continues: 'The backlog within Housing Benefit Supplement itself has reached horrendous proportions'. Asssessments of benefits for tenants who put their claims in as far back as September still haven't been processed.

The whole mess fell this week into the lap of Linda Bellos, newly elected Lambeth leader

The next uprating of housing benefit is due in July but Lambeth has yet to implement the changes made in November 1985 and the recent rate decrease.

The central problem with Lambeth's scheme has been poor management, exacerbated by changes in management personnel and lack of interest from the majority of councillors in the previous administration, all but three of whom have now been surcharged and barred from office. The computer used to process claims has never been programmed properly. Another report prepared by council officers suggested nine months ago that Lambeth must totally restructure the scheme to sort out the mess. Although this has been official council policy, the report has not been implemented.

Several councillors in Lambeth's new administration are concerned to stave off the disaster because, as the report puts it: 'while other authorities seem to have got over the worst of their problems, the situation in Lambeth is becoming more critical'.

Christian Wolmar

They'll be privatising the granite next — oops they are!

UNDER privatisation prompting from the Department of Energy the Cornish geothermal energy project, which has had £14 million of public funds, looks likely to wind up the subsidiary of a Californian energy company.

It was an initiative of Tony Benn's in 1978 when he was running the Department of Energy (DoE). Seeking to adapt to UK needs technologies already operational elsewhere in the world, the 'hot rocks' experiment of Rosemanowes quarry, Stithians, Cornwall involves pumping water thousands of feet underground, where the naturally high temperature of granite produces steam and, potentially, electricity.

Until a few days ago it looked as if the DoE would cut off funding from September on expiry of the present contract. A further breathing-space has been allowed, but the DoE has made plain that the team of 60 scientists — under administration by the Camborne School of Mines — must prepare for commercial management and seek further financing elsewhere.

No British firm has come forward, so the leading candidate to take over the project is Geo Science Ltd, a private concern led by Dr Tony Batchelor, who has nursed the Cornish experiment from its infancy a decade ago to today, when it seems about to be commercially viable. The California-based Geo Thermal Resources International has 75 per cent of Geo Science Ltd.

The apparent willingness to give away the fruits of £14 million of research rather than pay out more to keep it in public ownership is all the harder to assess given the DoE's reluctance to publish its own report on the economics of geothermal energy. This was commissioned over a year ago and written by Dr Richard Shock of the Energy Technology Support Unit of the DoE's Chief Scientists group. He has since been told it needs 'rewriting'.

Graham Smith

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Row over Kitson's Ruskin post, TASS, and City-AA

PA

Garlands of welcome wilting into wreaths on his career at Ruskin?

CONTINUED funding of South African exile David Kitson's Ruskin fellowship by the trades union TASS seems to be contingent on his openly distancing himself from City of London Anti-Apartheid Group (City-AA). He says he 'won't join witch-hunts'.

AUEW/TASS's end-April Bournemouth annual conference was picketed by students from Ruskin college Oxford demanding TASS keep to its deal with Kitson, jailed in South Africa in 1964 as a member of the national high command of Umkhonto we Sizwe, military wing of the African National Congress (ANC), and released in May '84 after serving nearly 20 years.

Ruskin students say that whilst David Kitson was in prison, TASS promised a guaranteed post for him at Ruskin following his release. At conference, delegates from No 16 Division TASS accused the TASS executive committee of reneging on this guarantee.

There's no dispute that TASS *did* pledge to fund a Ruskin fellowship for Kitson. He took up the post in January 1985 initially on a three year contract. There was to be a review, assumed to be an academic review, after the first year. However in a letter dated 4 November 1985, John Jones, assistant secretary TASS ec, wrote:

> '... the Executive Committee have now agreed to extend the funding of your Research Fellowship until the end of Summer term 1986. It will then be reviewed dependent on the problems with the ANC being resolved.'

Kitson, Ruskin students and staff, and his supporters in TASS say his job shouldn't be dependent on this kind of political condition. Pat Phipps, No 16 Division, asserts that the funding of a TASS fellowship is a TASS decision and shouldn't be made dependent on Kitson's relationship with an outside body, viz the ANC. 173 students and staff at Ruskin have signed a petition calling on TASS to continue the funding without conditions, which they call an attack on academic freedom.

David and Norma Kitson have both been suspended from the ANC, though both say thay have no differences with its political aims. At TASS conference Kitson said that after his arrival in Britain he was asked to 'denounce' City-AA of which Norma, and Steven and Amandla Kitson are members. He was also asked to 'denounce' the Revolutionary Communist Group (of which none of the Kitsons is a member), and Trotskyism, of which he has never been a supporter. He said he could see 'nothing wrong' with City-AA and declined to attack them or 'denounce one group after another'. The dispute in the Anti-Apartheid Movement between the national leadership and City AA appears to be behind the TASS ec's letter to Kitson.

John Jones, replying to Kitson at TASS conference, accused City-AA of 'disrupting' the 1984 AAM agm and giving rise to 'widespread bad publicity'. Jones also confirmed that TASS will not continue to fund Kitson's job unless he 'resolves his problems with the ANC'. This is assumed to mean publicly attacking City-AA.

Kitson made it clear at conference that he won't do this. He said TASS has promised to help him build 'a new life — 'I didn't expect it to be as a poodle. I'm not going to jump through any sectarian or ideological hoops or join in any witch-hunts.' He told the conference of a message of personal support from Nelson Mandela.

Terry O'Halloran

MISCELLANY

Well hello, here we are in an unusual location and delighted to be so — all in the interests of a Labour victory, viz our 3-page election analysis special on pp 7-9. And to begin with, the misfortunes of just one councillor . . .

Watery grave

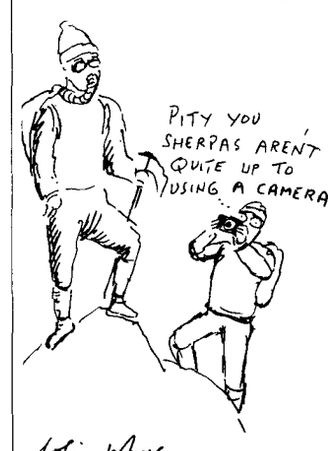
Poor old John Robertson, vice-convenor of the Highland Regional Council. Did you hear what happened to this stalwart enthusiast for the nuclear power biz? At the Thurso enquiry into Dounreay he made a splendid show of drinking a jar of recently-collected rainwater, flouting HMG's post-Chernobyl advice. He promptly lost his Easter Ross seat to fiercely anti-nuclear Elizabeth Wilkerson.

A guru speaks

Toryballs: Lord Whitelaw on Radio 4's *Today* 13 May: 'I have always believed, for a very long time . . .'

Social climbing

Meanwhile, not a dry eye in the Establishment for sherpa Tenzing who with a little judicious finagling of dates was allowed to 'conquer' Mount Everest on the Coronation day of the Dutiful and Pleasant Gentlewoman in 1953 alongside Great White Sahib Lord Hunt. What the gushing obituaries couldn't quite bring themselves to mention was that Tenzing got the cutting upper lip from



the British Imperial team and never forgot it for the rest of his life. The year before Hunt's ascent Tenzing had been head sherpa for the Swiss Himalayan climb, and was allowed, by gad sir, to eat and doss with the cuckoo-clock folk. Hunt as the representative of a global power put him firmly in his place, heaving him back among the lowly common-or-garden bearers.

Swedish exercise

More lording it over the aboriginals. We all take for granted that when the Brits are shamed before the world (average, once a week) at least the Swedes will set an international moral example. But oh dear me . . . those good people have just become the FIRST outside whitey's branches of the Commonwealth to sign a deal with BP and the Aussies' Western Mining Corp to take uranium from Roxby Downs, Oz. That's the mine which has displaced Aboriginal people, yet again, from the few areas still left to them.

A guru acts

Moggballs: The Arts Council's organisational review has resulted in the disbanding of the Finance & Policy Committee in favour — for a trial period only — of a . . . Policy & Finance Committee.

New organs please

The Gay Medical Association, 150 members or so (doctors, dentists, nurses) usually keeps a low profile for reasons which won't escape anyone who can remember James Robertson Justice, macho bully of the Doctor *movies. But it has become exercised enough about its grapevine knowledge of surgeons' cack-handed treatment of patients they suppose to be gay and fear to be Body-Positive to write letters to* The Times, *the* Guardian, *the* Observer, *and the* Sunday Times. *That was two weeks ago. Silence has remained golden, or shall we say Justician, in all four letters pages ever since. Gee, don't the papers help with the Aids-information campaign?*

People's capitalism

The *FT* all-share index has 'come off' (*trans:* dropped) since the Collection Can last spoke. Bid fever has abated. Allied Lyons has sprinted out of the clutches of Aussie predators Elder's, netting 11 per cent for those of you who bought them on *Alcoholic Anonymous*' behalf. This week's Collection Can tip: Shell. The oil price has been creeping back up. Profits to *Friends of the Earth.*

Nom-de-Amstrad

In memory of Denis Thatcher, so soon (praise be) to retire to Dulwich with his lady-wife Countess Falkland of Factor we sign off from now on with his favourite term of abuse for journalists

Reptile

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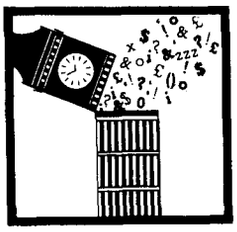

LOCAL ELECTION SPECIAL

OMINOUSLY REASSURING FOR MRS THATCHER?

The débâcle at Ryedale, the narrow squeak at West Derbyshire and the loss of over 700 council seats induced mass panic in the Conservative Party. JOHN CURTICE, CLIVE PAYNE and ROBERT WALLER pore over the psephological entrails and proclaim that the Tories are actually no more unpopular now than last summer

We estimate the national standing (per cent) of each party implied by each round of local elections in this parliament as follows:

	Con	Lab	Alliance
1984	37	38	22
1985	32	37	27
1986	34	37	27

The result was not therefore some kind of unprecedented Conservative disaster, but rather almost an exact re-run of last year's shire county elections. If anything the Conservatives were doing slightly better than last year and Labour slightly worse. The number of places where exact comparisons can be made are limited but they illustrate the overall conclusion:

Change in % share 1985-1986

	Con	Lab	Alliance
Basildon	−2.2	−3.1	+5.4
Bath	+0.4	−2.6	+2.4
Brighton K	+5.2	−1.2	−4.1
Brighton P	+1.9	−1.6	−0.2
Bristol W	+0.1	−0.4	+0.4
Cambridge	+2.9	+2.8	−5.5
Norwich S	+4.6	+4.5	+0.1
Portsmouth S	+1.3	−0.6	−0.5
Slough	−1.0	−1.3	+2.3
Southampton T	−2.2	+1.9	+0.3
Southend W	−0.2	+1.0	−0.8

Thus, despite Westland, despite British Leyland and despite Libya, the Conservative Party was no more unpopular this spring than it was last. What was different was the territory that the Conservatives had to defend. In 1985 they were defending seats won in 1981 in the face of a clear national Labour lead. This time they were defending the profits of the Falklands Factor; the same overall performance this time was bound to produce greater losses of both seats and councils.

Equally, the results were only moderately good news for Labour. True, Labour was running at a level which could just give them an overall majority, *if* the Alliance were to take rather more Conservatives than they were doing last Thursday. But Labour failed to make any significant electoral advance on its election performance since 1983. Comparison, for example, with the results in 38 English parliamentary constituences where elections were also held in 1984 shows a slight fall in its average level of support of 0.7 per cent, while its overall Scottish tally was 2 per cent lower. Post-Fulham, there's been much talk of Labour having become a more credible and effective contender for power, aided not least by the slickness of its 'freedom and fairness' campaign. But Labour has still to demonstrate in either local elections, the Euro-elections or over a continuous series of national opinion polls that it can break the 40 per cent barriers. Until it can do so its ability to achieve an overall majority at the next election must remain in serious doubt.

Tactical squeeze

Many commentators claimed in the immediate wake of the declaration of the results that they heralded the advent of a 'two-party system'. Voters were flocking to whichever of Labour or the Alliance looked better placed to defeat the Conservatives in their area. And a tactical squeeze on whichever of Labour or the Alliance is the weaker in a constituency at the next election would help Labour to an overall majority.

This expectation has gained credence from the three most recent parliamentary by-elections. But those by-election results need reading a little more closely. The Fulham by-election result was only as good for Labour as might have been expected given their current national opinion poll popularity — but no more. In both Ryedale and West Derbyshire what also needs explaining is a collapse in the Conservative vote 6.8 per cent higher than was occurring nationally. Indeed, without the evidence of the collapse in the Conservative vote, many fewer Labour voters might have felt it worthwhile to make the switch to the Alliance.

Equally, the local election results did not produce the simple pattern that some suggested. While the Alliance did do reasonably well in some of the constituencies where it lies a good second to the Tories, it did not always do so at the especial expense of Labour rather than the Conservatives.

Good Alliance performances change in % vote since 1983

	Con	Lab	Alliance
Richmond	−12.4	+3.8	+8.6
Twickenham	−15.0	+5.8	+9.2
Leeds NE	−8.8	+2.7	+6.2
Portsmouth S	−16.9	+5.0	+11.9
Southend W	−17.2	+4.0	+13.2

While the increase in the Labour vote in these seats is about 4½ per cent below the national average, the fall in the Conservative vote is also 4 per cent greater.

Just as importantly for the 'two-party' system thesis, there was no consistent pattern of the Alliance doing well in its target seats. Its vote fell, for example, in Crosby, Pudsey and Edinburgh West. Meanwhile, it proved itself capable of achieving notable increases in its vote in such Conservative/Labour marginals as Birmingham Yardley, Feltham and Heston, and Norwich South.

City Syndication

If Kinnock's feeling cocky over last Thursday's results, he's got a shock in store

But to assess the extent of tactical voting in local elections we should really look at the results in individual wards, not parliamentary constituencies. Analysis of the change in each party's support since 1982 in a sample of 428 wards in England suggests that while tactical voting did occur, it wasn't widespread. And, as in the by-elections, equally significant was the Alliance's ability to win not extra Labour, but extra Conservative votes where it had a chance of winning.

It's true that the Alliance was more likely to lose votes in wards that were marginal between Conservative and Labour in 1982 but this was not simply a squeeze to the benefit of Labour, but also the Conservatives. Labour's net advantage over the Conservatives was only of the order of 1 per cent.

Change in % vote 1982-86

Con % share of Con + Lab vote	Con	Lab	Alliance
over 70%	−9.1	+6.2	+2.9 (111)
55-70%	−7.3	+9.5	−2.2 (85)
45-55%	−5.8	+10.1	−4.2 (69)
30-45%	−6.1	+7.1	−1.0 (92)
under 30%	−3.4	+6.9	−3.5 (71)
All wards	−6.9	+7.8	−1.2 (428)

Equally it's true that the Alliance performed best in wards where Labour was third in 1982. But the Conservatives were squeezed more than Labour.

Change in % vote 1982-86

Third party 1982	Con	Lab	Alliance
Conservative	−4.2	−9.1	−6.1 (81)
Labour	+7.5	+6.8	+8.5 (134)
Alliance	−3.3	+2.2	−2.5 (213)

Altering the options

The Alliance's ability to win seats last week was improved not so much by a tactical squeeze on Labour as by attracting extra Conservative voters. As these voters come from their principal competitors they are indeed twice as valuable as votes from the third-placed party. It's often forgotten that in gaining second place the Alliance can alter the tactical options open to Conservatives as well as Labour voters. It becomes much less credible for Conservative candidates to claim that the electorate have to vote for them in order to keep out socialism. It may be that considerations like this help to explain why once the Alliance bandwagon rolls in a by-election, first-placed Tory votes can be as vulnerable as third-placed Labour ones.

The Alliance succeeded, indeed, in doing the reverse of what it did in the 1982 local elections — winning more votes in wards where it had the best chance of winning. This year's local elections confirmed the evidence of last year's elections that the Alliance vote is beginning to be more concentrated geographically, with important implications for its ability to win seats.

Change in % Alliance vote 1982-6 Alliance share first/second place with

Alliance % vote 1982	Labour	Conservative
less than 30%	−2.2 (49)	+0.9 (53)
30-35%	+0.7 (12)	+1.9 (29)
35-40%	−6.5 (13)	+2.6 (18)
over 40%	−11.6 (7)	+4.3 (34)

In Conservative/Alliance wards, the stronger the Alliance, the less Labour increased its vote. Labour voters were only prepared to vote tactically where it was particularly likely to be effective and did so in a context where the Alliance also demonstrated an ability to win extra Conservative votes also.

The variation in the voting patterns last week did contain some hidden dangers for the Conservatives. But while there was some tactical voting, it was limited in scope and scale, and it was the Alliance rather than Labour who were better able to benefit. The danger for the Conservatives comes not only from switches of support between the opposition parties, but also from the release of anti-socialist votes into the Alliance camp. And Labour would not be best pleased if that happened in a general election either. ●

This commentary is based on results collected by BBC TV's Newsnight *and the* Guardian *and analysed by the authors.*

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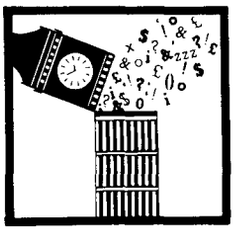

GRASS ROOTS GUIDE TO THOSE LOCAL TREND-BUSTERS

TOWER HAMLETS, Wandsworth and Liverpool were striking exceptions to the broad Labour advance in last week's council elections. JOHN RENTOUL reports on Labour's last rotten borough and the local factors of race and sexuality; IAN WILLIAMS, probably the only person who knows what really happened there, reports from Merseyside

THE ONLY COUNCIL that Labour lost last Thursday was Tower Hamlets, the real-life site of *EastEnders*. Liberals standing for the first time in three wards swept away the last seven of Labour's 'rotten' seats.

The rot set in in 1963 when three popular socialist boroughs amalgamated to form a large inefficient council at a time when the emigration of young families left power in the hands of an aging gerontocracy. Labour held all 70, then all 50, council seats until 1978, which disguised the disastrous effects of its inaction in an area where over 80 per cent of people live in council housing.

But the real triumphs of Liberal 'community politics' were in 1978 and 1982. The parties' share of the total vote last week was almost the same as in 1982, with Labour achieving high swings in seats taken by the Liberals four years ago to offset first-time Liberal votes.

Thursday's Liberal gains owed more to the divisive transformation of the Labour Party over the past four years, which has led to the Liberals holding the balance of power on a hung council between the official Labour Group and the Labour left (at the recent budget meeting the Labour left and Liberals combined to defeat an official Labour proposal to cut the rate).

Four of the old guard, including mayor Paul Beasley, won a few hundred votes as 'Tower Hamlets Labour', handing three seats in Lansbury ward to the Liberals by as little as 52 votes. Now only five of Labour's 24 seats are held by the old guard, but these are councillors still in touch with their communities, and all five saw off Liberal challenges with increased votes.

In fact the 'Bermondsey Factor' is dead. The Liberals took Limehouse ward, where they didn't stand last time, by just five votes. And in St James's ward veteran Bethnal Green politician Albert Jacob — popular with Labour's left and right — won a seat *back* from the Liberals on a 15 per cent swing.

Labour's bitterest pill (and the Liberals aren't pleased either) was that the Alliance only won control of the council by the election of a single SDP councillor in Blackwall. In a split ward Labour's white candidate was elected, but Bangladeshi Sunahwar Ali — polling only three quarters as many votes — was not.

Wandsworthless

Racist and reactionary abstentions could also account for Labour's failure to win control in model Tory Wandsworth, where two black and one 'out' gay candidate lost in marginal split wards, where white heterosexual Labour candidates were elected — Earlsfield and Furzedown.

But in areas where the Black vote was mobilised, such as Brent or Haringay — where Bernie Grant increased his vote by 400 despite saturation propaganda against him in the Tory press — Black candidates outperformed the general swing.

Transsexual and ex- (now anti-) Militant Rachel Webb was also safely elected in Lambeth, and Maureen Colquhoun, whose defeat as MP for Northampton in 1979 is often attributed to her being a lesbian, was actually elected in a split Labour-Liberal marginal, Wenlock, in Hackney.

Outside London's inner-city battleground, Labour's gains were within 1 per cent of the spectacular. In Merton (otherwise known as Wimbledon) Labour gained 12 seats from Conservatives, in two cases coming from third place to do so. In Dundonald ward, for instance, Sandy Cowling upset a 706 Tory majority over the Alliance to take one of the three seats for Labour by 21 votes.

Enley Taylor: attracted 180 fewer votes than his white Labour running mate in Earlsfield ward, Wandsworth — and 112 fewer than the successful Tory

Maureen Colquhoun: won a *startling victory over the Liberals in* a split ward in Hackney on a 21 per cent swing

Liverpoll slump

The exception to this sweep back against the 1982 Falklands Factor outside London was Liverpool.

Despite Derek Hatton's visible relief transmuting to triumph on Thursday night, comparison with Manchester shows how badly Labour really performed. Manchester's Labour Party won 86 seats to an opposition of 13 while, as we forecast (2 May) Labour *did* keep control of Liverpool — but with only 54 seats to 44. They were a few slender majorities away from losing control, but that didn't stop Militant claiming it as a proof of their popularity.

The Tories lost 15,000 votes and all but one of the seven seats they defended. But they lost the six not to Labour, but to the Liberals, whose vote rose by over 11,000. 'Victorious' Labour lost over 16,000 votes, and in terms of swing, there were 20,000 more non-voters, including many ex-Labour supporters.

In Granby ward the independent Black candidate got 437 votes, but Labour's Dave Leach still increased his majority by publicly distancing himself from Militant.

Similarly, across the border in Knowsley, where Labour usually gets results which make Albanian elections look like cliffhangers, the tendency proved unpopular. Councillor Peter Fisher was deselected by a ward meeting which consisted mostly of the family of his opponent Gerry Beyga, brother of Hatton's holiday companion Tony Beyga, of ASDA fame. Fisher stood against him as 'Labour Against Militant' and romped home with an 827 majority.

On the other hand, Felicity Dowling, the only candidate on the National Executive's hit list won — but with 10.5 per cent swing against Labour — the city's largest. Third largest swing, 9.6 per cent against, was Hatton's own ward, Netherly.

The results indicate that Labour support is unlikely to go lower, but that there is plenty of potential for growth. Indeed a return to 1984 support levels, plus the national swing, would see the party romp home in event of by-elections for the disqualified councillors.

Teresa Gorman: one of 11 unspeakably nasty Thatcherite Tories ousted by Labour in Westminster — Mrs Thatcher's own council where Shirley 'Tesco' Porter now has a majority of four

But the message is that Militant loses votes, and losing Militant would do wonders for the Labour Party in the future.

Many councillors are supporting a bid to replace Hatton as deputy leader by non-Militant Roy Gladden, which is likely to be more effective than the wallowing confusion of Walworth Road. Larry Whitty and the National Executive said the Temporary Co-ordinating Committee was finishing after the election, but this week it met on Monday to vet candidates for the municipal candidates panel, and convened a 'Not the District Labour Party' meeting on Wednesday, apparently with the approval of national organiser Joyce Gould. Peter Kilfoyle, the firefighter put in by the National Executive, has been muzzled by the party's Northwest Regional office and forbidden to talk to the media. But no one is silencing Militant's tendentious press releases.

The message from the results for Neil Kinnock and the National Executive isn't to lay off the tendency. It is Praise Fulham and Pass the Ammunition. ●

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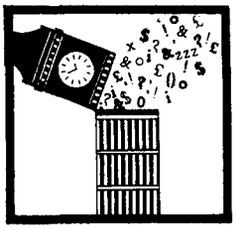

Biffen wants Thatcher to go — but have his tactics misfired?

PETER KELLNER

CABINET MINISTERS are not meant to talk like that. To admit that the government is in trouble, that it needs a new style of leadership and that the opposition is run by perfectly decent people who would have no truck with extremism: these sentiments appear nowhere on the tablets of stone handed down by Mrs Thatcher.

At an earlier stage in Mrs Thatcher's premiership John Biffen would not have dared to say any such thing; or, if he had, he would have faced the sack. It says much for Mrs Thatcher's loosening grip on her Cabinet that Biffen can now say what he does without the remotest fear of dismissal. The last person to be sacked for talking out of turn was Francis Pym three years ago. Yet his comment, about the difficulties of large majorities, was both self-evidently true, and mild by Biffen's latest standard.

There is no great secret about what Biffen is up to. He thinks Mrs Thatcher turned soon after the last election from an asset into a liability — and has now turned from a liability into a disaster. He has thought for some time that she should go. He blames her for a succession of unnecessary, destructive decisions: the banning of unions at the government's communication headquarters, the prosecution of Clive Ponting, the handling of the Westland and British Leyland crises, the Libyan bombing. Biffen considers that Mrs Thatcher made avoidable mistakes because she lacks the capacity to listen to her colleagues when faced with a problem and then to make a rational, mature decision.

Biffen decided to bide his time until he could strike. That occasion presented itself last Sunday, when he was invited to appear on *Weekend World*. He was, in fact, the programme's third choice. Originally, Roy Jenkins had been lined up; but the Alliance did better than the programme team expected in the local and by-elections. They decided to fire some tough questions at a top Tory instead. Norman Tebbit was the obvious choice, but he had already been lined up by TV-am. So Biffen had his chance.

Whether Biffen has contemplated his next stage is less clear. Before the Falklands War, when Mrs Thatcher was also unpopular, I quoted the words of Ernest Bramah's creation, Kai Lung: 'There are few situations in life that cannot be honourably settled, and without loss of time, either by suicide, a bag of gold, or by thrusting a despised antagonist over the edge of a precipice on a dark night'. This mock-Confucian saying seems to sum up Biffen's predicament. There is no bribery that can induce Mrs Thatcher to step down and she shows no sign of choosing to commit political suicide. Only the dark-night routine is left open to Biffen.

Yet even here Biffen seems to have limited his options. The 'clean' way to thrust Mrs Thatcher over the edge would be to do it privately. A deputation consisting of Viscount Whitelaw, John Wakeham and possibly Biffen himself would go to the Prime Minister and tell her the game was up. In polite but forceful terms she would be 'invited' to retire. A suitable excuse — her eyesight, say — would be found for her to bow out with dignity. A 'safe pair of hands' (a euphemism for Sir Geoffrey Howe) would be installed in her place to take the Tories through until after the next election. Other competitors for the leader's crown would be told to wait another two or three years.

BIFFEN'S OPEN declaration of war last Sunday means that that strategy has been abandoned. It may be that if Mrs Thatcher loses her battle for survival, a retirement excuse will still be given. What has been destroyed is any chance of preserving the public myth that her departure would happen when and how she chose. The battle has now been joined publicly, with Malcolm Rifkind weighing in on Biffen's side, and Norman Tebbit and Nigel Lawson defending the Prime Minister. And we can expect more of the kind of briefing that Bernard Ingham gave the lobby on Monday, when he said that Mrs Thatcher would continue to 'lead from the front' and that Biffen was something of an eccentric who should not be taken too seriously.

In the short term Thatcher may well be unsettled by this hullabaloo. She dislikes dissent — and dislikes even more seeing Cabinet ministers raise two fingers to her in public. But if there is to be a battle, better from her point of view that it be a public one. She can challenge her critics to put up or shut up — to run a candidate for the party leadership in the autumn. She knows that however much Tory backbenchers fear for their seats while she remains at Number Ten, they fear even more the fallout from an open contest to depose her.

Moreover, a public debate is liable to be lop-sided. Biffen is by far the most brazen of Mrs Thatcher's Cabinet opponents; but even he had to dress up his attack on her on Sunday as a plea for 'balanced ticket' leadership: he stopped short of demanding her resignation, even though he made sure his code was easy to crack.

Thatcher's allies, on the other hand, can say exactly what they mean: that she should stay, that the party can still win the next election under her leadership, and that the Tories would look foolish if they changed course now and effectively disowned their strategy of the past seven years.

There is a further important difference between a privately-staged coup and a public act of rebellion. In a private coup, the alternative leader need not declare until and unless the coup succeeds. Sir Geoffrey Howe can keep out of the way, busying himself with affairs of state, and leave others to plunge the dagger into Mrs Thatcher's heart. But the more public the rebellion, the harder it becomes for the rebels' putative leader to remain silent. Or, if he does stay silent, the harder it becomes for the rebellion to succeed.

For all these reasons, it seems to me that the events of the last few days have strengthened rather than weakened Thatcher's hand. She may lose the battle and retire to Dulwich with Denis. But she has her opponents where she wants them — sufficiently out in the open to be forced either to advance and mount a formal challenge this autumn, or to retreat and say Biffen made a ghastly tactical error. Either way, Thatcher's opponents risk humiliation.

HOW TO SURVIVE is not the only tactical calculation facing the Prime Minister. Assuming she does not quit, she must start calculating the timing of the next election. The unpleasant tax implications of the plunge in oil prices, together with the recent surge in the unemployment figures, have almost certainly ruled out any prospect of an election this year. Most people now assume it will come in June or October next year.

I wonder. *If* the economy picks up; *if* there are significant tax cuts next year; *if* inflation stays low; *if* the government can erase its image of caring too little about our schools and hospitals — then maybe the Tories will have a clear lead in the polls by next summer and Mrs Thatcher will risk an election. But if, as is more likely, things do not go sufficiently well with the economy and the Tories remain behind, or at best level-pegging with Labour, then Mrs Thatcher will be tempted to hold on until the spring of 1988.

If she does she might repeat James Callaghan's mistake in 1978, when he decided not to hold an autumn election, hoping that Labour would do better the following year. In fact, it did worse. But politicians have to be optimists about their own electoral prospects. Mrs Thatcher is no exception. Tories who hope to be shot of her within the next two months are more likely to have to wait for at least two years. □

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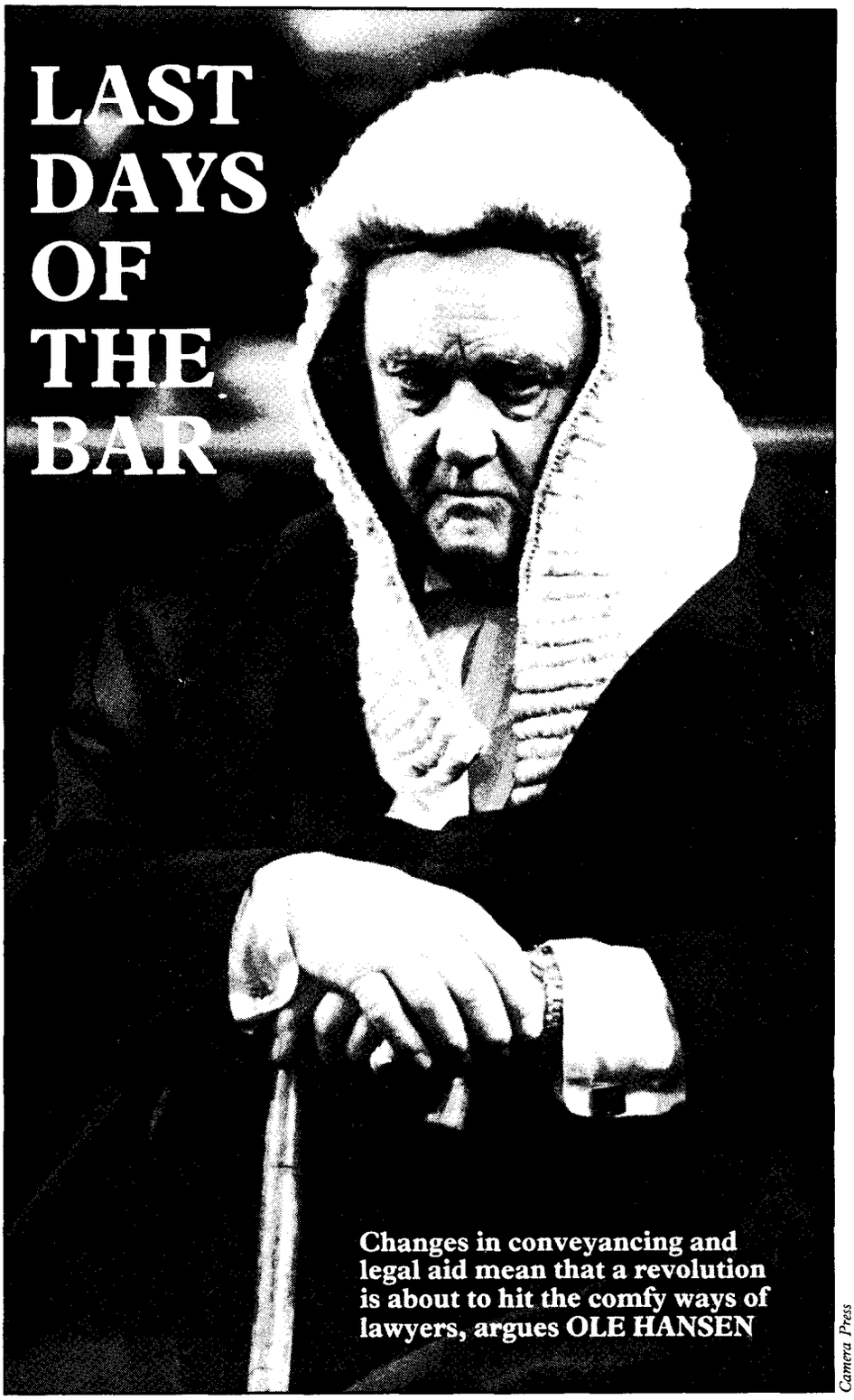
LAST DAYS OF THE BAR



Changes in conveyancing and legal aid mean that a revolution is about to hit the comfy ways of lawyers, argues OLE HANSEN

Camera Press

WE MUST ALL be governed, Ministers keep telling us, by the rule of law. It is the ultimate safeguard of our democracy. By that they usually mean their law on public order. What they certainly do not mean in practice is that every citizen, regardless of circumstance, should have equal access to legal services. Because, for the vast majority of citizens, the law is too costly, too remote and too blind to their needs to offer them anything at all.

Most solicitors are in business to meet the legal needs of those with property. They know little and seem to care less about the rest. If you are a landlord, solicitors will tender for your custom. If you are a tenant, you will be lucky to find one to give you the right time of day. 'Few solicitors are skilled and experienced in Rent Act work principally because much of it is legally aided and unremunerative' wrote the Organiser of Chelsea Citizens Advice Bureau just over a year ago.

This bias is bred into the profession. Conveyancing, company and tax law are taught in immense detail while the rights of tenants or employees are squeezed into a couple of lectures. Employment law is considered from the viewpoint of the 'business client'. The legal rights of workers embodied in the Sex Discrimination Act, Equal Pay Act and Race Relations Act are taught as 'problems in recruitment'. How can this education be expected to provide people's lawyers?

Solicitors receive more than £25m a year from legal aid but too few know how it works. This can be disastrous for the client. A good example is the 'statutory charge': the legal aid fund takes any outstanding legal costs from the money or property awarded to a person on legal aid. In 1983 the profession was shocked when Elizabeth Sexton was awarded a lump sum of £15,000 from her former husband — but faced costs of £23,000.

Such cases are not uncommon. Last year the Lord Chancellor's Legal Aid Advisory Committee remarked on 'an imperfect understanding of the charge by some members of the profession and a failure to communicate its effect in any comprehensible way to the assisted person, both at the outset of the proceedings and as they continue'.

This is not surprising. Legal aid depends on private practice solicitors who spend most of their time doing other work. Legal aid contributes less than 10 per cent to the total gross income of the profession, compared with 50 per cent from conveyancing. Last year over 70 per cent of offices received less than £20,000 from the legal aid fund, which is less than the full cost of one assistant solicitor and a mark of how little legal aid work most firms do. They certainly keep their distance from potential clients. A survey by the Lord Chancellor's Department in the 1970s found that solicitors' offices are congregated where owner-occupied property is found.

THE TRUTH IS that legal aid is not a public service at all. It is a private service paid for out of public funds. This was the structure chosen by the post-war Labour government in 1950. Instead of challenging private practice as it had done in the case of the health service, the government accepted a blueprint from the English Law Society and asked it with its Scottish sibling to run the new scheme. Lawyers' trade associations thus became the only private bodies in the UK dispensing public money to their own members.

That now has to change. First, it is increasingly expensive. Between 1980 and 1986 legal aid costs rose three times as fast as public expenditure generally. From now until 1990 they are expected to rise five times as fast. Any government will have to consider alternatives which promise to be more cost effective, such as a national salaried service.

Second, the network of small general practices on which the legal aid service depends is about to shrink due to the drop in conveyancing income. This will accelerate when banks and building societies are allowed to do conveyancing. Without public money, whole areas will become legal deserts. But if more public money goes in, leaving the administration with the Law Society will become impossible to justify.

The other force for institutional change is the imminent disappearance of the separate Bar, another domino to fall as conveyancing

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income to solicitors shrinks. There will no longer be a common front between barristers and solicitors as solicitors demand the right to earn money by speaking in the higher courts — currently a monopoly of the Bar.

Governments may be stuffed with barristers — the main cause of the Bar's traditional complacency about its professional privileges — but they will not subsidise the Bar forever. Over half the Bar's gross income is from the public purse — legal aid or prosecution fees. The squeeze on legal aid fees has already led to the recent unprecedented lawsuit against the Lord Chancellor. The new Crown Prosecution Service will increasingly replace barristers with salaried lawyers. A huge bulge of 'baby barristers' from the 1970s now expects the standard of living enjoyed by previous middle-aged barristers, but the work to provide it is not there. Removing the barriers to competition with solicitors or going into salaried service will increasingly seem attractive.

IF THE SEPARATE Bar goes so do the traditional methods for appointing the judges. This is the opportunity to remove the Lord Chancellor's unchecked powers of patronage. Barristers depend on the Lord Chancellor for advancement. They apply to him to become Queen's Counsel — which means much more money for less work. This year Lord Hailsham chose 48 out of 248 applicants.

Barristers also depend on the Lord Chancellor for a pension. Few barristers have pension policies in the safe expectation of 'an appointment'. High Court judgeships and above are reserved for the Bar, but in addition the Lord Chancellor has in his gift hundreds of well-paid pensionable jobs for which the only, or best, qualification is that you are a middle-aged barrister and that you have kept your nose clean.

To help him choose, the Lord Chancellor keeps records on all barristers which they are not allowed to inspect and which are specifically excluded from the Data Protection Act. They are 'awful files with all the gossip, everything in them, including their drinking habits', Lord Hailsham gleefully confided to the *Sunday Times* last year.

He has the same power over judges. Judge James Pickles wrote recently in the *Guardian* that: 'Unless a judge renounces as I have, all claims to any sort of promotion, honour or favour — all of which flow from Lord Hailsham's overflowing hands — it is dangerous to step out of line'.

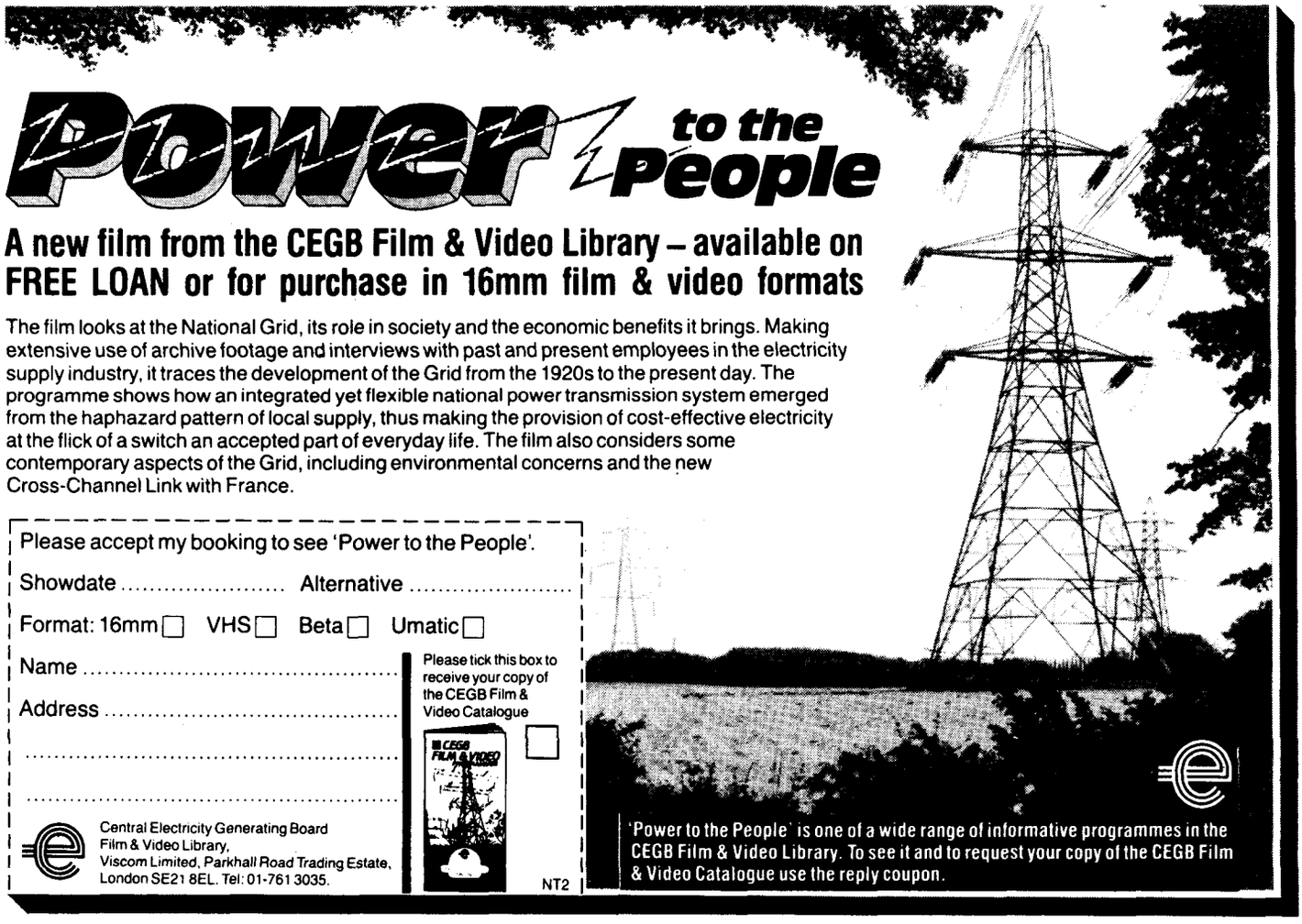
THE LORD CHANCELLOR's powers are under attack not just because they are too great, but also because they are in conflict one with another. He is simultaneously a Cabinet Minister, head of the judiciary and Speaker of the House of Lords. As a Cabinet Minister, it would be improper for him to interfere with a judge's exercise of office. On the other hand, judicial misbehaviour would be his business as head of the judiciary. Two recent cases show with what care that line is drawn.

In 1979 Lord Justice Lawton, our senior criminal judge, in delivering the judgement of the Court of Appeal clearing George Lindo of robbery, made a travesty of the facts. (He failed to refer to evidence from the DPP of police corruption in the case and commended the police for an investigation they had not carried out.) Replying to a complaint from the Legal Action Group, Lord Hailsham wrote: 'I am not prepared to comment on the alleged state of knowledge of a judge at the time of giving judgment. For a Minister to do so would be constitutionally improper'.

Four years later Woolworth's complained about a Recorder who had criticised the firm for bringing a private shoplifting prosecution against a 77-year-old widow as 'an affront to British justice'. Lord Hailsham wrote back that while he would not comment on decisions, he was free to consider behaviour. 'Recorder Goldstein's conduct was intemperate and made before he had heard the evidence in the case. It follows that his remarks should not have been made. I have written to him to this effect.'

We have then, in the Lord Chancellor's office, a profound anomaly at the heart of our unwritten constitution. The traditional separation between the legal system, parliament and government is asserted, but primarily functions as a cover for lawyers' professional self-conservation with which the Lord Chancellor will not interfere while permitting the Lord Chancellor's arbitrary rule.

Political responsibility for the workings of the legal system must be taken out of the exclusive hands of the lawyers. The allocation of resources, the structure of administration and the education and training of professionals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in the public service are not legal questions — they are political ones.

THIS IS NOT to lose sight of the truth on which the separation of powers is based: that a major function of the legal system is to resolve conflicts between the individual and the executive. The question is how to create newly effective checks in place of those which have become ineffective.

And the question *is* 'how' not 'whether'. The Government's Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill already takes away control of legal aid from the Scottish Law Society and gives it to a board appointed by the Secretary of State. Something similar is likely soon for England and Wales. The Conservatives are responding to events and, if it is a question of curbing public expenditure, will even prefer a quango to a private professional body.

But despite all the one-time radical talk about breaking up monopolies and closed shops, they show no inclination to undertake fundamental institutional changes in any coherent manner.

Not that the Opposition parties have much to offer. To be fair, the Alliance parties at least seem to have thought about it. They propose a Ministry of Justice to replace the Lord Chancellor's Department (and take some functions from the over-blown Home Office). But the Minister of Justice/Lord Chancellor would remain a senior lawyer and legal aid would still be delivered by private practitioners and run by the Law Society, except that the private practitioners would be paid more money. The Alliance proposals were out of date before they were published earlier this year.

The most useful suggestion, which the Alliance only puts forward in the most tentative way, is for a Judicial Services Commission, such as already exists in some Commonwealth countries. It would advise on the appointment and conditions of service of the judiciary. It could be developed to take responsibility for the appointment and discipline of judges and could include members from outside the legal profession — not that the Alliance would be in favour of anything which affected the control of the professionals.

The Labour Party has nothing so coherent to offer. At last year's conference a resolution calling for 'the next Labour government to completely reform the legal system' was withdrawn at the last minute. In the absence of conference resolutions the Party has been left with the vacuum that is the Labour lawyers; they lack not so much a willingness to undertake fundamental reform as an awareness that it is needed. Earlier this year John Morris QC, the shadow Attorney-General, spelt out the first priority for a Labour government: to give a 'proper reward' to the private sector which would continue to provide 'the overwhelming part' of legal services through legal aid. When it comes to reform, the difference is less between Labour, Conservative or Alliance than between lawyers and the rest. □

Ole Hansen is a solicitor and former director of the Legal Action Group.

HOW FAR ARE *YOU* FROM A REACTOR?

Even those reconciled to nuclear power should be worried about the siting and safety of Britain's reactors, argue STAN OPENSHAW and JOHN FERNIE

IF THE NUCLEAR industry rides the current storm, it can still only offer us a zero-infinity dilemma; either there are no accidents at all or the consequences of an accident are literally incalculable. In these circumstances rational decisions are impossible to make. The honest truth is that 'safety cannot be guaranteed' and yet we need nuclear power for the future.

Already people are asking how far can they safely live from the nearest nuclear power station; for many people, perhaps the majority of all voters, it is too close. Over 68 per cent of the UK population live closer to a UK nuclear power plant than the citizens of Kiev to Chernobyl.

In order to allay people's fears, the government should undertake a safety review of our existing reactors and, in the new spirit of openness, publish the results. An assessment should be made of their vulnerability to terrorism. Furthermore, all reasonable practicable steps should be taken to minimise the consequences of a BIG accident if it ever did happen.

This objective is already an accepted safety principle for nuclear power plants, but the current emphasis is on safety through design features. More emphasis should be on siting as a safety measure and on realistic emergency planning arrangements.

The initial response of the CEGB to Chernobyl was to stress the lack of an outer containment wall in the Soviet design. But our MAGNOX and AGR stations do not have the sort of secondary containment structure which is proposed for Sizewell B; a 1.4 metres thick reinforced concrete structure that encompasses the reactor vessel (primary containment) and other equipment. Moreover, our early MAGNOX stations possess a steel pressure vessel which could suffer catastrophic failure with nothing to contain the resulting release of radiation. The later MAGNOX stations and the AGRs have concrete pressure vessels and are probably considerably safer. Probably — because in essence, we have developed a series of prototypes. But how safe is one design compared with another? (That is, from the early MAGNOXs at Berkeley and Bradwell to the latest AGRs at Torness and Heysham II). The current design requirement is that the predicted frequency of any single accident leading to a large uncontrolled release of radiation (eg a BIG accident) should be less than once every 10 million years of reactor operation: Do they satisfy this? Are existing designs less safe than the proposed PWR for Sizewell? What are the likely consequences for human and animal health and the land from design accidents at existing sites?

There is a dearth of published information on these questions. A brief safety study was published for the AGR but nothing in detail. If the government is really committed to a policy of openness, safety reports and accident consequences studies should be *published* and subject to peer review.

Similar questions can be asked of our military reactors operated by the UKAEA and BNFL. The stations at Calder Hall, at Sellafield and Chapelcross in Dumfriesshire house the oldest operating reactors in the UK. For these and our early MAGNOX reactors which have reached the end of their design life supplementary questions must be answered. How do the safety characteristics of a reactor change with age? What is the current state of the control systems in use at these plants? Is full use being made of the latest microprocessor technology to minimise operator error? Is it credible that these older stations are really safer than the USSR reactors built 20 years later? If the answers are not convincing then perhaps there is a safety case for closure.

NO ONE CAN today deny that terrorism will affect nuclear plants or can even seriously suggest that such facilities are not important targets. The probability of a BIG accident has been assessed as miniscule because it is based on the likelihood of *equipment* failures. But the risks of such failures resulting from sabotage may well be several orders of magnitude greater than the usual sort of random system failure that is taken into account at present. For example, the AGR's concrete pressure vessel is assumed never to fail because the only credible failure mechanisms could not happen by normal failure routes. It could occur by sabotage. Safety studies need to be extended to accommodate damage by terrorist attacks;

Existing siting criteria (1)

Distance band (in miles)	Maximum all round population	Maximum population in most densely populated 30 degree sector
0-1	7,000	3,000
0-1½	20,000	8,000
0-2	38,000	16,000
0-3	92,000	39,000
0-5	254,000	121,000
0-10	935,000	477,000
0-20	3,578,000	1,889,000

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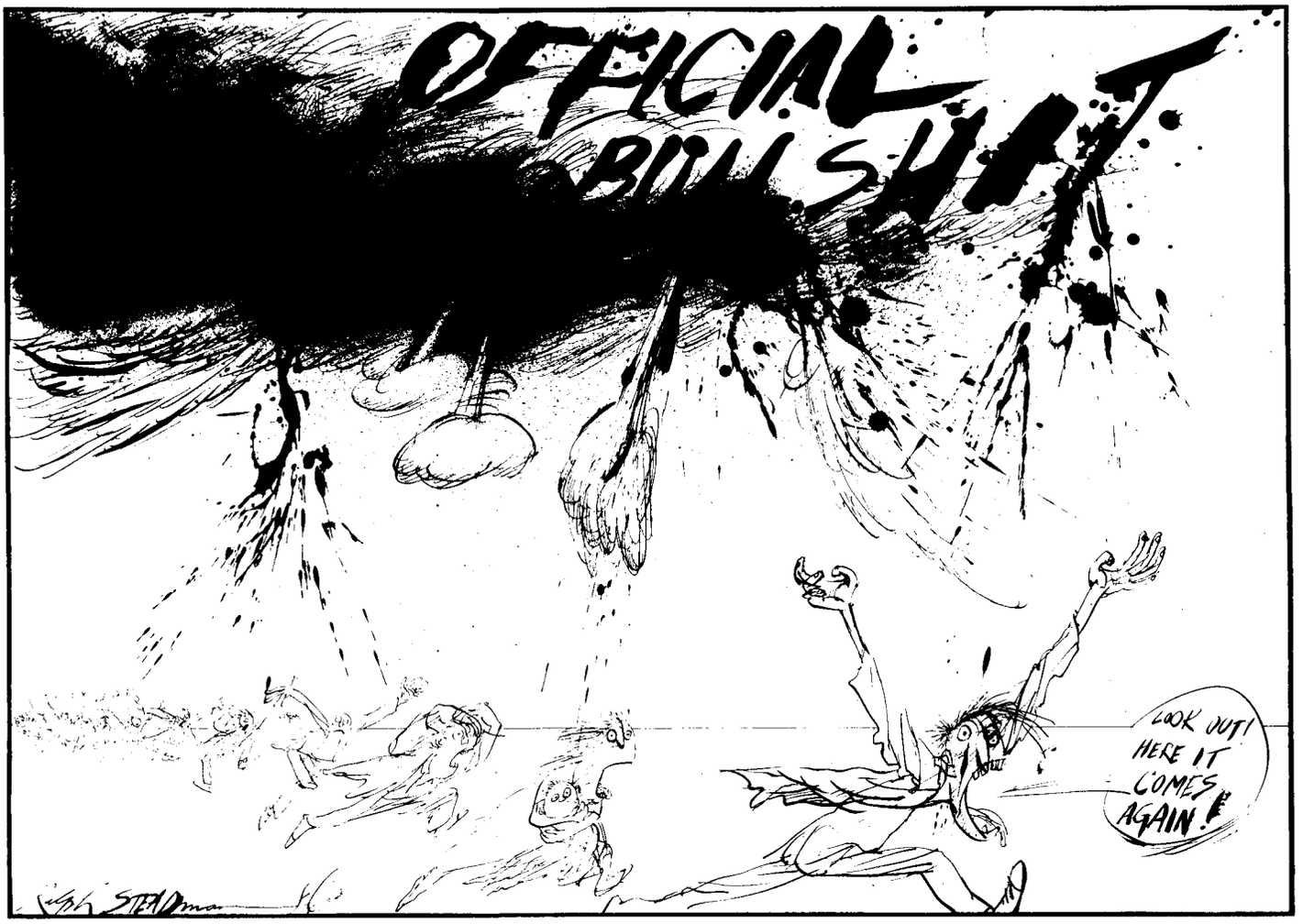

design modifications should be introduced to limit the consequences.

Risk to a plant from outside factors like nearby industrial explosions should also be more seriously assessed. The Hartlepool plant for instance is both in a major population area and near a large chemical complex.

BIG accidents can happen. This has been shown at Chernobyl. A last line of defence is to locate reactors in areas where few people live. Unfortunately, in the UK the selection of the site as a safety mechanism has been given little importance. Before 1967, a 'remote siting' strategy was adopted. This meant the population within 10 miles of a reactor site had to be less than 600,000. The justification for this figure has never been published. Nevertheless, all but two of the current reactor sites in Britain were selected to conform with these remote siting criteria.

After 1967, total emphasis for public safety was entrusted to the reactor designer following the development of the AGR which was deemed to be incapable of any catastrophic release of radiation. Thus it was thought to be suitable for urban sites and previous population constraints could be relaxed. By the early 1970s the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate appeared to be using slightly more stringent restrictions in the selection of sites. These limits are still in force today (see Table 1). They exert little or no real constraint on sites as about 85 per cent of the entire UK land area is classified as a safe site.

These siting criteria have no real scientific justification. The radiation release on which they are based relates to no known accident scenario. The models used to derive the population density are now obsolete and parts have never been explained in any publication.

The extent to which the past and existing site safety criteria have failed to limit the number of people living around reactor sites to levels which might be regarded as manageable in major emergencies can be seen in Table 2. The population within a 19 mile radius is a good estimate of those likely to have been evacuated after the Chernobyl accident (apparently, 49,000 people were moved). The population at risk in the UK is significantly higher around 15 of our 17 nuclear power plants.

Populations living within 19 miles of existing nuclear power stations (2)

Station name	Population in 000s	Site designation
Berkeley	879	remote[1]
Bradwell	682	remote[1]
*Dungeness	237	remote[1]
*Hinkley Point	454	remote[1]
*Hunterston	440	remote[1]
Oldbury	984	remote[1]
Sizewell	141	remote[1]
Trawsfynydd	67	remote[1]
Wylfa	59	remote[1]
Druridge Bay	650	remote[3]
Hartlepool	987	relaxed[2]
Heysham	540	relaxed[2]
Torness	43	remote[2]
Calder Hall	130	BNFL
Chapelcross	186	BNFL
Dounreay	16	UKAEA
Winfrith Heath	407	UKAEA

** AGR also located here*
[1] these are all MAGNOX sites; [2] these are all AGR sites; [3] this is an adopted possible future PWR site

EVENTS OF THE last few weeks have been critical for the nuclear industry in the UK. The BIG accident, which the experts said could never happen because of *engineered* safeguards, has occurred. Reassuring statements from the nuclear industry will no longer be taken for granted and a significant majority of the electorate now perceive themselves at risk if the experts are wrong.

In order to restore some element of public confidence in the nuclear industry, political guidance will be necessary. Safety reports, probabilistic risk assessments and the consequences of various accident scenarios should be published.

Chernobyl has exposed the weaknesses of our existing siting policy. If a BIG accident occurred, the emergency plan would be virtually unmanageable at some sites because of the number of people involved. In the long run, it would be sensible to develop only sites which minimise the consequences, particularly early deaths and land evacuation, of BIG accidents. New remote sites for reactor parks would be selected. The costs of such a strategy may appear high, but it would be a small insurance premium to pay for the future acceptance of an uncertain technology. □

Dr Stan Openshaw's book, Nuclear Power: Siting and Safety *was published in March by Routledge Kegan Paul. Dr John Fernie is co-author of* Resources: Environment and Policy, *published in January by Harper and Row.*

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BIG MAC PENETRATES MINDS OF MINERS

MARK HOLLINGSWORTH on the Coal Board's new ways and means of persuasion

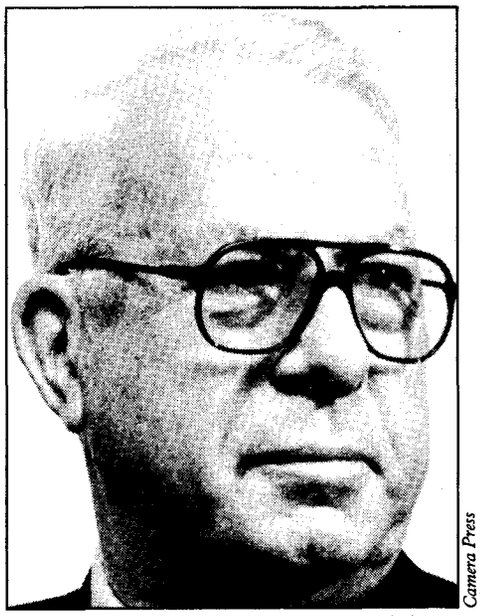
THOSE WHO HOPED Ian MacGregor, due to retire as chairman of the National Coal Board this summer, had already disappeared in the debris of the miners' strike will be disappointed. He is still working on ways of making mining unions powerless, though this time by rather more subtle techniques than the head-on confrontation of two years ago.

The first union to feel the effect of the new strategy is NACODS, the union for pit supervisors, who balloted their members last March on action over the proposed closure of Bates pit in Northumberland. Feeling was running high as the independent colliery review body had recommended the pit should stay open. NACODS however voted by 60.3 per cent against the proposed national overtime ban.

A factor in their decision was, think union leaders, the decision of the NCB to communicate direct with individual union members — a form of management in nationalised industries pioneered by Sir Michael Edwardes at British Leyland (where MacGregor was deputy chairman). Peter McNestry, NACODS's General Secretary said that management is now intent on bypassing his union and the NUM and 'going over our heads'.

In the Kent area all NACODS members received bulletins from their colliery manager three days before the ballot warning them of the consequences of an overtime ban. Although they were written by the local pit managers, the bulletins contained remarkably similar wording. 'An overtime ban would be futile and self-destructive' was a phrase taken up by local management in all three bulletins. The clear implication was the spectre of compulsory dismissal. An overtime ban 'could force the NCB into compulsory redundancies' (Tilmanstone) and 'could lead to the possibility of compulsory redundancies' (Betteshanger). NACODS members at Snowdown were told: 'Lower market share equates fewer coal jobs, and fewer jobs must inevitably lead to compulsory redundancies'.

The Coal Board argue that they are merely improving their employee communications because the traditional channels of consultation have been ineffective. This desire to appeal directly to the workforce has been personally initiated by the chairman Ian MacGregor. 'We used to rely on a system of consultation as a means of communicating with our workforce', he said. 'The system was not working because it did not help us communicate our thoughts with individual miners'. The NCB now believes in using modern communication techniques to bypass the unions. In the past, it was union officials and leaders who supplied workers with information about pay settlements, redundancies and new working practices. This gave the unions an often crucial advantage because they could prepare their strategy for possible industrial action by controlling the flow of information to their members.



Camera Press

Ian 'I'm gonna git my message into yar sitting room' MacGregor

MacGregor has been a long-time advocate of appealing directly to the workforce. In December 1980, as chairman of British Steel, he launched his 'survival plan' for 20,000 redundancies with a series of videos which were shown at the steel plants and personal letters to the homes of all steelworkers. Private opinion polls were also commissioned.

When MacGregor became chairman of the Coal Board he was keen to continue these methods. However, during the miners' strike they were opposed by Geoffrey Kirk, then director of public relations, and Ned Smith, then director-general of industrial relations. Since the end of the dispute the NCB chairman has been anxious to return to the communication techniques he used at BSC.

And so in March 1985, MacGregor asked long-standing associate Tommy Thompson to conduct an investigation into the 'machinery of communication' in the coal industry. Thompson was the ideal man to conduct the survey. He is chairman of Opinion, Research and Communications (ORAC) — 'specialists in management employee communications'. Thompson, who refused to talk to the *New Statesman*, was a *Daily Mail* journalist for 20 years, later becoming its political editor. In 1965 he joined Tory Central Office as a 'special tactical assistant' to then Party chairman Edward DuCann. In 1967 he founded Opinion Research Centre (ORC) with Humphrey Taylor and secured an exclusive contract to carry out private market research for the Tory Party.

In the mid-1970s Thompson became interested in trade union reform. After he left ORC in December 1978, he explained in a letter to the *Guardian*: 'I became convinced that sensible reform of Trade Unions and a return of power where it belongs (the Government) was vital to the well-being of Britain'.

In early 1979 Thompson founded Opinion, Research and Communications (ORAC) and also set up Dragonfly Publications which produced booklets on employee-management communications. During the 1979 General Election, Thompson wrote to several companies asking for contributions of up to £10,000 to finance a scheme to focus attention 'on the union problem'. The letter stated: 'The survey findings will be released in time to play a part in the General Election debate'. He suggested a national referendum on the unions and a centre for institutional reform, financed by big business, to push hard for union reform. The letter continued: 'The reading of data accumulated by ORC over 10 years leads me to believe that we could within five years (unless Mrs Thatcher is more successful than her predecessors) be ripe for some kind of extremist solution'. Thompson denied that he was anti-union. 'There is no sinister plot about this', he said at the time. 'I believe that public opinion, when properly used, can be a powerful force for good'.

In the early 1980s, ORAC conducted surveys into social attitudes for large companies. In July 1982, Thompson did private opinion polls for British Rail during the ASLEF dispute and helped compose letters to the striking train drivers. Until May 1983, Thompson was also chairman of Modern Management Communications Ltd (MMC). Their parent company is Management Communications Centre, which specialises in media training facilities for top executives. Their clients include the CEGB, Scotland Yard and British Petroleum.

Within a year of leaving MMC, Thompson became, along with ex-Saatchi and Saatchi chairman Tim Bell and *Times* columnist David Hart, part of Ian MacGregor's unofficial public relations 'think tank'. From the beginning of the pit strike, Thompson conducted private opinion surveys for the NCB chairman in the mining areas. Polls such as asking miners whether they thought MacGregor or Scargill was telling the truth were seen as a waste of time by the Board's industrial relations department. But MacGregor persisted with them throughout the dispute. In addition, Thompson hosted a private dinner club for 'captains of industry' at a restaurant in London's West End.

AFTER THE STRIKE Thompson agreed to do the communications survey for

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MacGregor. His ORAC report was completed in August 1985 and its findings were highly critical. 'Communications appear to be bad — worse than we have found in any other survey'. The document makes clear what it sees as the biggest weakness in the NCB's strategy: 'The Board makes less use of meetings addressed by managers and allows more meetings addressed by union officials than the great majority of comparable organisations in both the private and public sector. This imbalance is tantamount to handing the initiative on communications to the unions on a plate'.

The report's conclusions were welcomed by MacGregor, although some Coal Board press officers believe it 'exaggerated the true position'. Within three months new communications seminars had begun at the NCB staff college in Chelfont, Buckinghamshire, and at Graham House in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Since January 1986, 350 management personnel, including pit managers, have attended these three day courses which involve the use of video units and instructions on improving face-to-face communications with miners.

Other changes arising from Thompson's report are that *Coal News* is now given free to all employees. In North Derbyshire, the NCB have introduced 'Team Briefing' which is a system of monthly meetings by colliery management and officials to pass on management information to all employees. The Industrial Society prepares the 'Team Briefing' documents for collieries. MacGregor now believes the 'communications problem' has been solved.

'Team Briefing' originates from a trip to the coalfields of Kentucky and Virginia in December 1984. NCB managers have since gone on a number of study tours to the United States. The Coal Board say they are simply going to learn about mining techniques and management practices. Certainly, instilling a new correct attitude in management seems to be the essential concomitant to by-passing the unions.

One such trip was a 12-day fact-finding expedition by 18 engineers to Illinois and Pennsylvania in November 1985. The *New Statesman* has obtained one of their reports. Entitled 'Improving Productivity Through People', it reports that 'It is apparent that non-union mines also search out any tendency towards trade union sympathies in any applicant. One Superintendent said that mines which had a history of union militancy were those where a village had been created with the mine. In these cases the companies had in the past deliberately not recruited from the pit village but had gone further afield in order to break the lineage or mould. Other companies have used the opposite method and moved the mine'.

The reports dealing with mining equipment and working practices have since been discussed in NCB seminars. But the more sensitive issue of union-management relations has not formally been on the agenda in Coal Board meetings. However, the conclusion of the November 1985 report states: 'Yes, their culture is different but if we get our thinking right we will be better able to take advantage of the changes which are taking place in the attitudes within our industry'. □

WOMEN'S MAGAZINES

TOP GIRLS FAIL TO BITE

LORETTA LOACH asks why *Working Woman* didn't work

'MONEY IS POWER, power is status. I know that this used to be an unseemly way for a woman to talk about money and control. But I take money as a measure of my capabilities'. This is Judith de Paul cutting her teeth in the tough media world, writing last winter in *Working Woman*.

In March this year, this princely possession — 100 glossy, full colour pages for £1.25 — for the girl at the top ran into money difficulties. Its circulation was down to 50,000 (tiny in the world of women's magazines) and it suffered an ignominious takeover by 68-year old businessman Peter 'the Cad' Cadbury. At first the editorial team welcomed the rescue but rumours that the magazine is to be turned into a cross between *Tatler* and *Cosmopolitan* led to their resignation earlier this month. Editor Audrey Slaughter, who launched the magazine in September 1984 and who had hoped to stay on as editor, is now joining them.

Working Woman had a successful American counterpart, and the British version borrowed from and re-fashioned its format in the image of today's go-getter. It was never a magazine for ordinary mortals. The 40 per cent of working women who say that their work is not at all fulfilling would have found little for them in it. It was far more remote and intimidating than brash *Cosmopolitan*. *Working Woman* was intended for the confident career woman for whom diffidence is nothing but a swear word. 'What shall I do', sighed Miss Worthington in one issue, 'I'm ever so clever and well qualified. I want to make money, I want some success, respect, fulfilment and great happiness. Accountancy, teaching, medicine, law, engineering surveying. Which offers me more?' As though happiness or misery were simply a matter of choice.

The pages of the magazine were flavoured with encouragement for small investors, tips on property law and other material which helpfully illuminated the various paths to money and power. It was a diet which seemed more suited to the bolder, more ambitious American woman but in Audrey Slaughter's view 'women here are just as ambitious but not quite so driven. They want success but they are not prepared to sacrifice everything to get it'. She would not be drawn on why her magazine failed, but clearly her view of the place women ought to occupy in society (if only they tried) struck few chords in what even ambitious women feel about themselves and work.

New owner Cadbury (his first requirement of women, he told *Today*, is that they look good) found the magazine far too feminist and austere for his taste. Yet being happy was crucial to *Working Woman*'s idea of success; and this is where the feminism came in. It made the desire for power legitimate. For power was not so much the ugly prerogative of male dictators but the need we all feel to have an effect on the world. So there was the occasional article on assertiveness and the recognition that being like a man can be a disadvantage if you want to get others to do what you want: 'We want more of what men have but we're not going to become like them to get it'.

In this country, this prescription was not a saleable commodity. Perhaps there are not enough women in management positions or, more importantly, aspiring to management. British feminism has always been more critical of ambition, success and capitalism itself. In the USA, feminism is much less the 'enemy within' than it is here. It draws support from a wider range of women, a significant number of whom found roles in the politically pluralistic system which operated under the Democrats in the late '70s. The tradition of legally fought civil rights cases, as opposed to Britain's class struggle and direct action, invited a much more constitutional and professional form of organising — with notable rewards. The National Organisation of Women won an executive order over 20 years ago preventing companies guilty of sex discrimination from getting government contracts. It has certainly protected women's right to work in a way that Britain's discrimination laws cannot.

There are bands of female corporate executives in the US and other layers of professional women organised through networks and volunteer organisations. No comparable infrastructure exists here. Rather the small number of successful women either disclaim feminism or dare not come out as ambitious for fear of invoking the wrath of their left-wing sisters.

For the women's movement in the US was never the property of the Left to the extent that it is here. Its feminism has been far more affected by the re-adjustments of capitalism than by changes within the Left. In 1979 when President Carter criticised the nation's 'self-seeking masculine drive', feminism seemed the perfect antidote. Its value of personal growth and non-materialistic self-fulfilment were adopted — but adapted — by the prevailing political culture.

There are no ideological counterparts here to the 1980s American feminism that now hardly dares speak its name. Perhaps it's just a matter of time. In April's *Cosmopolitan* Dr Leah Hertz says: 'It is time to bring in from the cold all the female high flyers who have been alienated by the Women's Movement, the extreme Left and the GLC Women's Committee. Women who have had the strength and stamina to fight it out in a man's world deserve a re-definition of feminism.' Katherine Whitehorn said something similar in last week's *Observer*. Perhaps *Working Woman* was merely ahead of its time. But I confess I prefer capitalism to come clean and not beguile me with feminist frills lest, before we know it, feminism has made cowards of us all.

Loretta Loach works for Spare Rib.

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RECORDS PROTECTED — PEOPLE EXPOSED

The Data Protection Act provides no challenge to the threat to privacy, report DUNCAN CAMPBELL and STEVE CONNOR

IN DELAYING and diverting privacy legislation, the authoritarian argument is that there is little to worry about, scant evidence of abuse and no tide of public concern. 'There have been few reported instances in this country of information held on computer being misused so as to threaten the personal privacy of individuals,' claimed the 1982 White Paper on data protection.

The first danger lies in the accumulation of very large quantities of data on large computers. Such information stores are by their nature the most heavily used. Consequently, erroneous data may propagate more widely; and the opportunities for unauthorised or improper insertion or extraction of information are multiplied.

Such databanks are predominantly to be found in the public sector, though there are two in the private sector where threats may arise. These involve the computerising of the national electoral register and its merging with much other marketing and socio-econometric data for profiling purposes.

The basic data is extracted annually from the electoral register (except for in the London Borough of Greenwich, which refuses to sell the register to commercial companies for this purpose). This information is combined with mailing lists bought from other organisations, or managed on behalf of clients. Local census statistics are used to classify each housing area on a socio-economic base, assessing income levels, 'lifestyle', housing occupation, average age and family pattern, housing tenure and ethnic characteristics.

Governments departments have also merged postcode and other records. Postcodes and addresses were cross-linked to television licence records by the Bristol computers at the National TV Licensing and Records Office. The resulting file was used to generate letters to every household not listed as having a licence.

The initial letters enquired about television ownership. These were followed by more mailings, one of which included a threat of visits by TV licence inspectors. Only one of these mailings seriously allowed for the possibility that the recipient did not actually possess a television set. Householders who did not own a TV — or who held a valid licence — had an absolute legal right to refuse to respond to an inspector, or to ignore the harassing welter of unwanted computer mail.

THE DATA PROTECTION Act received the Royal Assent in July 1984, but many of its provisions can't be enforced until November '87. From 11 May 1986, the operation of an unregistered databank became an offence; and compensation became available for some victims of inaccurate data. After November 1987, people who are the subject of computer data files will, finally, have a general right to see and challenge information which is held about them.

However, it is extremely unlikely that either the Act or the Register will pose any serious impediment to the central computer plans of the DHSS and the Inland Revenue — or to any other central databank plan still held in the dark recesses of the Central Computing and Telecommunications Agency.

To these problems may be added the new potential surveillance tools: scanners, character readers, text retrieval databanks, identity card and passport monitors, telephone-call logging equipment, and much more — tools which would create grave enough difficulties for a law which had actually been designed to protect personal privacy.

Eric Howe, the Data Protection Registrar: presiding over an unworkable act. Only a fraction of those who should have registered have done so

But the Data Protection Act was designed minimally to comply with the European Convention on Data Protection, lest British business suffer from a prohibition on international electronic information processing.

- It does not cover manual records, allowing information users to protect their most damaging data by retaining them or transferring them to paper.
- Information once held on a computer databank need not be disclosed to the data subject if it is later moved to being processed only on paper.

Sir Norman Lindop has christened such activities *extrusion* — the process of moving personal data onto manual records or otherwise altering it radically, in order to evade data protection law. Other problems posed by the Act include:

- There is no supervision or inspection of data users after registration; violations of the Act will only be detected, in almost all cases, if the data subject happens to stumble across evidence of abuse.
- In consequence, data subjects have no chance of ensuring that damaging or unlawful processes are stopped before they cause actual harm; the harm must necessarily occur first.
- Data subjects have no *right* to have inaccurate data changed; they may, with difficulty, apply to a court for a ruling that inaccurate data be expunged from the record — which the court need not give, (why a court should wish that inaccurate data be retained has never been explained.)
- The Act does not allow government departments to be prosecuted for any offence, although private users are liable to criminal prosecution and penalties.
- The Act provides no safeguard against a data subject being forced to obtain access to sensitive personal data about themselves, and then pass it on to a third party (such as an interviewee being asked by a potential employer to produce a copy of their criminal record).
- The Act grants ministers absolute power to exampt 'national security' databanks even from registration; other databanks are fully registered but partly or wholly exempt from subject access.
- Information exempt from access for a purpose such as the 'prevention and detection of crime', the 'apprehension or prosecution of offenders' or the 'assessment or collection of any tax or duty', as well as for 'national security', is neither inspected by the Registrar, supervised nor even registered.
- The Act could become a tappers' charter for the exempt agencies, who could conceivably use the Data Protection Register itself as a guide to gathering further personal information.

IN MANY RESPECTS, the Data Protection Act is woolly, ambiguous and formless. The Act's supervisory body, the Data Protection Registry, is small, weak, burdened with some excessive regulation, constrained from entering the few real danger areas, and bereft of necessary powers of investigation, inspection and surveillance.

Were the Registrar and Registry now to disappear in a sea of paper, never to be seen or heard of again in Whitehall, the mandarins might well exchange thin, reserved smiles over a morning's sherry and reflect quietly that data protection was less of an impediment to efficient public administration than first they had feared. This is how the British establishment has always neutralised 'irritating' civil rights reforms. □

The above is an edited extract from On the Record *by Duncan Campbell and Steve Connor, to be published by Michael Joseph on 19 May, £7.95 (paperback), £12.95 (hardback).*

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MEDIA

Half-hearted love of *Dynasty*

ANNE KARPF

IF MARY WHITEHOUSE is watching Channel 4 on Monday evening at 10.00 she may get a nasty shock. Not cavorting nude men with giant phalluses, or uninhibited scenes of sexual abandon, but families watching, or not watching, television. And the crude notion that the media simply drip their noxious ideas into passive, receptive viewers gets a thorough thrashing.

Part of the Furniture is the first programme in a new six-part Channel 4 series about television, *Open the Box*. Christopher Rawlence's stimulating examination of how people actually watch television is aided by some unique footage from the Department of Experimental Psychology at Oxford University, which installed cameras *within* TV sets, placed for a week in 20 homes. Whenever the set was switched on, so was the camera, watching people watching TV.

Watching was the rarest of activities which the cameras recorded. Instead, the families frolicked, ironed, hoovered (over the news), cuddled, slept, played musical instruments, knitted, made cups of tea, or left the room. A rapt and captive audience they weren't. As one viewer put it, 'I do something else almost all the time'.

Not that television passes through our lives without trace, wholly excreted at the end of the day, if it was ever imbibed. But television-watching, as media analysts are coming to realise, is a far more complex process than most tirades against 'copycat violence' or sympathy suicides would have us believe. The propagators of this 'hypodermic needle' idea of TV-watching (that television shoots its message directly into our minds and lives) have come as much from the Left as from the Right. The Frankfurt School, those Marxist analysts of mass culture in the 1930s and '40s, depicted readers, listeners, and consumers (of popular as opposed to high art) as passive and powerless receptacles of an irresistible capitalist or fascist ideology.

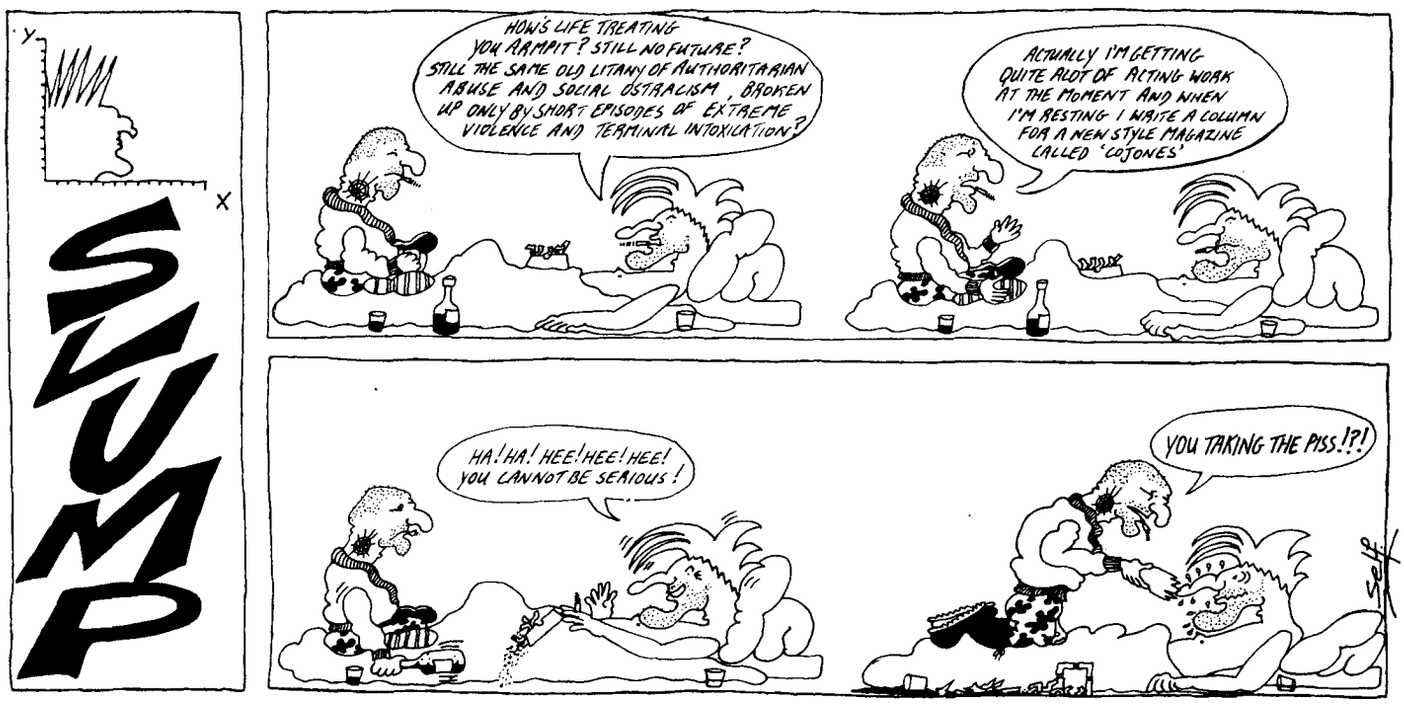
Contemporary radicals have reproduced this view, decrying the escapism of the soaps and the conservatism of news and current affairs: as if the media primarily act to create false needs which they then satisfy, and are pre-eminently culpable for every deviation from the socialist-feminist dream. Viewers, as Jane Root's useful book accompanying the series (*Open the Box*, Comedia) observes, have tended to be described by Left and Right alike as zombies. Many socialists and feminists talk of media messages as if they were firmly inscribed in media texts, just waiting to be read off by knowing radical critics (who themselves somehow escape its pernicious effects).

The main theoretical challenge to this notion of the audience acknowledges that viewing or hearing a programme is not just a passive process. Viewers and listeners actively make meanings, drawing on social and cultural codes and beliefs to make sense of what they view and hear. They also use their own beliefs to challenge, contest, and undercut media messages. Some media analysts got so carried away by this notion that television programmes seemed to disappear altogether beneath their gaze, becoming little more than a bundle of stimuli provoking viewers into their own, wholly individual constructions. Studies showing how little viewers remember of news bulletins even soon afterwards appeared to confirm television's feeble powers.

Increasingly, however, studies of the mass media are identifying the contradictions in popular culture. They argue *both* that there is a 'preferred message' which producers inscribe in their programmes, *and* that audiences interpret and actively decode programmes according to their own cultural position. They suggest that the media are rarely the supremely influential head-shrinkers of the Whitehouse nightmare, nor ideologically-innocent entertainers either. And they're developing more sophisticated ways of analysing popular entertainment, exploring how they enshrine current anxieties and manage prevalent tensions.

Increasingly, too, studies are turning to the *different* ways that different groups of people watch and understand. A study of the *Nationwide* audience found that groups of viewers differentiated by age, social class, race, and political affiliation understood quite diverse things from the same programme. And 'What are we going to watch tonight?' battles within families betray sharp gender divisions in viewing preference. Feminist critics are reclaiming genres like soaps, refusing to see them purely as escapist fantasies, or patriarchal ideologies about ideal families and submissive women, arguing instead that they depict strong women and are valuable expressions of emotional dilemmas and conflicts.

And slowly, the Left — trying to shake off the label of killjoy — is waking up to the idea of pleasure; it's ceasing to be something shamefully engaged in after meetings and ideologically-correct discussion. Learning to respect viewers and listeners, to take them seriously, doesn't have to mean gagging all criticism of the box, but just learning to live without the crude, kneejerk reflex of media-bashing. And yes, I love *Dynasty*. □


Y
X
SLUMP
HOW'S LIFE TREATING YOU ARMPIT? STILL NO FUTURE? STILL THE SAME OLD LITANY OF AUTHORITARIAN ABUSE AND SOCIAL OSTRACISM, BROKEN UP ONLY BY SHORT EPISODES OF EXTREME VIOLENCE AND TERMINAL INTOXICATION?
ACTUALLY I'M GETTING QUITE ALOT OF ACTING WORK AT THE MOMENT AND WHEN I'M RESTING I WAITE A COLUMN FOR A NEW STYLE MAGAZINE CALLED 'COJONES'
HA! HA! HEE! HEE! HEE! YOU CANNOT BE SERIOUS!
YOU TAKING THE PISS!?!

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DIARY

David Edgar

Birmingham

8.00 am: First of all, a quick tour of my three polling stations, to check they are duly personned, before repairing to the discreet residence which today serves as Committee Room Two. Others may assemble their materials the night before, but it's always my custom to set up first thing. After the hurly-burly of the hustings and the rough-and-tumble of the doorstep, there is something almost orientally calming about the time-honoured ritual of sorting the stationery, blu-tacking the notices and maps to the back of the door, and sellotaping the Reading pads to the pasting tables (organised by register, bunched by street). However, it is on the day itself when my particular humour comes into its own. As the world knows, the Reading device (pads of five carbon-backed sheets, of different colours, on which Labour promises are typed in register-order) was invented by Ian Mikardo in Reading to facilitate the knocking-up process by which the sedulously-located votes are gathered in. As a colleague tartly remarked some hours later, as I obsessively alternated ruling off the actuals with sending out waves of workers to mobilise the remaining promiseds, the Mikardo system is an anal-retentive's dream.

○

12.00 noon: As is usual, the Labour vote is slow a-coming, particularly in an area like ours where much of it is still in employment. By 12.15, three number-taker changeovers have been successfully accomplished, but we haven't hit 15 per cent of our vote on any register, so it seems a good moment to pop out myself (a stern, blu-tacked injunction warns: 'Bugger the Masses: Have *You* voted yet?'). As it happens, I vote in a somewhat leafier bit of the ward, where we expect the vote to split between the Alliance (running an amiable local butcher whose campaign has been — how shall I put this? — short on specifics), and the Conservatives (who've put up a former metro-councillor, of sullenly homophobic tendencies, to defend their seat). So it's quite a surprise to discover that neither party is number-taking the Oxford Rd Junior and Infant. Do they know something we don't know?

○

2.00 pm: Whatever it is, it ain't that the masses are flooding out in my demesne. On two of our registers (*partial* registers, an optimist insists), the Labour promised vote appears to have increased by precisely two in as many hours. Helpfully, the Almighty has provided us with brilliant sunshine and transylvanian cloudbursts, alternating at the pace of a strobe light ('Well, yes, dear, I know it's sunny *now*') and, to cheer us all up, the candidate arrives with her noisy car to tell us that down at Willows Crescent the Asians are coming out in droves. Even more significantly, she has visited every polling station and none of the three opposition parties (we face a Green Intervention, to soak up the anti-carnivorous centrist vote) is taking numbers anywhere. As it is pointless to knock up unless you know who's voted, this leads to hushed conjectures. This ward has never returned a Labour councillor. What does that Brecht poem say again?

○

5.45 pm: One amusing by-product of the mercurial meteorology of the afternoon is that we're getting very short on wheels (starters jam, carburettors drip, clutches seize). Luckily, like any properly organised Committee Room, all our car calls have been completed well betimes ('Well, I *think* her friend votes Labour') and so, when it comes to sending out the first wave of number-takers, I am impatient of loose talk of lifts. We are denied reinforcements by the Central Committee Room (let me rephrase that) but, nonetheless, by 6.35 our 57 pads have all gone green, with waves of workers interrupting evenings down 40 streets.

○

8.15 pm: And, with three quarters of an hour to go, the whole process has been repeated. The pasting tables are a riot of pink. There was a slight problem of cultural awareness about 25 minutes ago, as I tried to get the advance

detachments in place along Addison Rd for the final offensive — had I perhaps heard, a leading cadre witheringly enquired, of the artefact *EastEnders*? By 8.25, however, we're only up against *Falcon Crest* and *Tomorrow's World* (down, omen, *down*) and seeking in the last desperate half hour to up our turnout of promises from the not unhealthy 60 per cent we'd achieve when we pulled out the number-takers at 8.00.

○

9.30 pm: The boxes have been slow to arrive (the Methodist Church Hall 'lost her sense of direction'), but now the sampling is in full swing. As the votes are unfolded and grouped in 25s, the party's teams note as many votes as they can see, from which intelligence (set against the total votes for each box) a prediction of the final vote can be worked out. There is of course considerable scope for error in this process — the optimistic eye tends to spot more of ours than theirs and, in 1984, this factor led to a predicted hundred-vote victory mutating into an actual, if narrow, defeat. So, when I sidle over to sneak a look at the calculations, I'm inclined to give more credence to the small drop in our vote in the leafy bits (where the Nice Piece of Topside Factor is aiding the Alliance) than to the extraordinary picture that is emerging overall.

○

11.15 pm: As mentioned, our ward has never had a Labour Councillor. In fact, the last time it boasted a non-Tory, it was in 1893, a Liberal, and even then unconnected with the meat trade. In 1984, up against an unpopular Tory Council, we had lost by 23. This time, I suppose, most of us expected that historical precedent would be routed. But none of us, in our wildest imaginings (as the sweepstake predictions prove) thought that we would be converting a Tory marginal into a 1,000 vote Labour majority. If anything, the calculator prediction had underestimated our achievement. No, it was indeed as deep as a well — and if anything wider than a church door — and there was general agreement, when the candidate announced the result to the workers, peasants, soldiers and intellectuals assembled back at our house, that it would definitely serve.

ROGER WODDIS

A ticket torn in two

'One may, with Mr John Biffen, hanker after a "balanced ticket". But this is a ticket which is already torn in two.' — the Guardian

O my baleful Mr Biffen!
Causing certain necks to stiffen
  At your pallid point of view —
(*and* you know where you can stick it)
Criticising isn't cricket,
Talking of a balanced ticket
  That's already torn in two.

As the frightful foe advances,
Why go messing up our chances,
  Making puddles like a pup?
You're a proper little pleader,
Knocking our beloved Leader
  (you must know how much we need her),
  Cracking on and cracking up.

Yes, we've made a rotten showing,
Don't known where the hell we're going,
  But we must defeat the yobs,
We obey the Great Bewitcher,
Who has made the richest richer —
Never, never shall we ditch her
  (till, of course, we lose our jobs).

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John Cunnington/War on Want

CORY COMES A CROPPER

After the People's Power revolution in February, Cory Aquino asked for '100 days of patience' to implement reforms. That time is up this week — but she still has her work cut out to make head way in the countryside, reports JOHN CUNNINGTON

IN THE 'DEMOCRATIC SPACE' created by the revolution Cory Aquino has begun the process of dismantling the 20-year-old Marcos machinery and introducing reforms — the release of some political prisoners, establishment of two commissions, one for Good Government and the other for Human Rights, and a Ministry of Agrarian Reform. She has also shelved the Bataan Nuclear Power Project, repealed labour laws and negotiated rescheduling the national debt repayment and a ceasefire with the New Peoples Army.

Destitute sugar workers use abandoned land for subsistence farming

The euphoria which swept Manila during the three-day revolution was not felt to the same extent in the Provinces, however. The 'democratic space' for most people in the rural areas has yet to manifest itself. The two key areas needing reform are poverty and political repression which has been accompanied by increasing militarisation.

Seventy per cent of people in the Philippines live in the rural areas and 65 per cent work in agriculture and related occupations. Most people are landless and over the years have faced growing hardship and poverty. But demands by even the worst off peasants are simple and unspectacular. They are only seeking the right to produce and earn enough for their survival, to be able to grow or buy sufficient rice for their families and perhaps a few vegetables and some fish or meat occasionally. Throughout the 7,000 island archipelago, there is a stark contrast between the rich natural resources and people living in dire poverty.

Mindanao — the main island of the south — has a population of 12.5 million people. Military and paramilitary forces are said to number 200,000 in the island. The island produces almost all the export foods from the Philippines yet the extractive industries and plantations operated by more than 500 multinational companies have kept workers poor. More than 75 per cent have incomes below the recognised poverty line.

The islands located in the Visayas, like Negros, have also been heavily militarised. Negros or 'Sugarland' as it was once aptly named, is a social volcano. According to Bishop Fortich, unless reforms are undertaken which attack the root causes of poverty it will shortly erupt. In one *hacienda* I visited last week practically every family had lost one or more of their children over the last year from starvation. Now, out of a population of 2 million, a quarter are desperately hungry with no prospects of work in the sugar industry. Those who are 'fortunate' enough to find work are paid less than half the minimum wage of £1 per day.

The province of Northern Luzon — rich in natural resources, fertile lowlands and extensive forest — boasts the most spectacular terracing system in the world and deposits of gold, silver, copper, zinc iron and chromite. Whole communities have been thrown off to make way for so called 'developments'. It is no coinicidence that areas of interest to the transnational corporations are the most militarised zones.

President Aquino needs determination, power and support to tackle the fundamental problems of the rural poor. She needs a radical programme of reform which does not flinch when it comes to tackling both the exploitative practices of multinationals and the internal elements of her own government.

CORY AQUINO knows too that she must bring about agrarian reform if she is to win the hearts and minds of her people. The issue of land reform did not go unnoticed even by Marcos. But most of the 14 million hectares of

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agricultural land was exempt on the ground that it was 'devoted to export crops'.

Land became more concentrated in the hands of big landlords, foreign corporations and corrupt bureaucrats. Multinational corporations like Guthrie plantations in Mindanao amassed land by evicting poor peasants from their lands. Similar strategies were used in Cagayan in Northern Luzon and in Samar and Zamboonga del Sur to make way for infrastructural developments like dams, roads and bridges. Where tenancy agreements exist landlords have taken exhorbitant rents and tenants are charged as much as 60 per cent of their total produce.

The Federation of Peasant Organisations — Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas — has therefore pressed for policy decisions which favour 'those who produce the food and other basic needs of society.' Practical advances by the National Federation of Sugar Workers to utilise derelict sugar-lands for the production of food on a co-operative basis by sugar workers had met with mixed reactions. Some plantation owners have signed agreements with them for utilisation of their lands for subsistence farming. It remains to be seen whether this will prove 'too little too late'.

It is likely that the recently appointed Minister of Agrarian Reform, Herxzon Alberez, will need to call on the international community to increase its aid programme to such areas. It would be naive, though, to assume that the agrarian reform proposals will be welcomed by everyone. They will be seen as 'too much too soon' by those who benefited under the Marcos regime. The strongest reaction will be from those who have successfully implemented policies of plunder and exploitation; in 1980 the top 100 multinational corporations repatriated 47.8 per cent of net profits.

In spite of well intentioned efforts by President Aquino to address the fundamental problems left by the Marcos regime, success is not a foregone conclusion. Past experiences indicate a strong tendency by aid donors to link 'aid' with favourable investment climates. The most optimistic observer is forced to conclude that along with the reforms for democracy and land distribution, the Philippines faces further penetration by multinationals and attempted coups from the Right.

John Cunnington is War on Want's Programme Officer for Asia.

'And ever more came out of that same door wherein I went' . . .

This was the plaint of a man who could not escape the common round of conventional answers to his questions. Perhaps he was stuck in beliefs — maybe even sacred ones — but he was stuck. Is there no way out?

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HANDS ACROSS THE TIBER

'Brothers' at last; and smiles to make up for centuries of anti-semitism

AP

POPE HOPE FOR MID-EAST MEDIATOR

It's only taken 2,000 years for a Pope to set foot in a Jewish synagogue. A new direction in the Vatican's Middle East policy may come out of it, says T M PASCA

Rome

POPE JOHN PAUL II went to the main synagogue of Rome and embraced Elio Toaff, the Chief Rabbi last month. It was the briefest — an hour and a quarter — and the shortest — just two kilometres diagonally across the Tiber — of the Pope's many journeys, but historically it was the most significant one. For the first time in the nearly 2,000 years of Christianity a pope entered a Jewish temple. He called the Jews 'elder brothers' and in their presence he condemned anti-Semitism directed against the Jews at any time and by anyone. Everyone understood that he was referring also to popes over centuries.

During this meeting of Judaism and Christianity the applause and the tears in the predominantly Jewish congregation originated from all kinds of memories. In front of me were about 20 elderly Italian Jews with scarfs striped in blue to recall the concentration camp uniforms they had worn a little more than 40 years ago. Their applause was particularly intense.

But precisely because of such memories and deep feelings accompanying the papal visit to the synagogue it was understood to have a political dimension as well.

The pope's host, Rabbi Toaff, was one of the few people in Rome who would go on record with his interpretation of the political significance of the visit. His hope is that it will lead to the Vatican recognising Israel and lending its weight to negotiations for a peaceful settlement between Israel and Palestine. Israel's foreign minister, Yitzak Shamir, who is scheduled to become Prime Minister in October, is expected to sway his conservative Likud Party to accept the Vatican as mediator.

The Pope, as was to be expected, made no mention of the political implications during his address at the synagogue. But this silence does not signify refusal. Rather, it is characteristic of the contrasting ways in which Catholicism and Judaism look at and deal with religion and politics.

To the Jews religion and politics are fundamentally inseparable. The Israelis point to the Old Testament as their history and their historic reason for being what they are and where they are. (The identity of Islamic Arabs is even more closely tied to their religion: the Koran is the civil and religious law.) This religious-political identity does not exist in Catholicism. The Vatican's own political and diplomatic practices in particular should, in theory at least, relate to higher religious and moral ends.

OFFICIAL recognition by the Vatican is seen by Israel as useful since it would imply acceptance by an important religious and moral authority of the special relationship of Jews everywhere in Israel, a relationship which Israel strongly promotes. This does not present a problem *per se* to the Vatican which, in any event, in principle supports recognition and diplomatic relations with all countries. But, to the extent that such a move would be interpreted in the Arab world as the Catholic Church moving to the side of Israel in its

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conflict with the Arab states, it becomes problematic for the Vatican since this could seriously compromise the position and the lives of Christian Arabs.

The Vatican feels a direct responsibility for the Christian Arabs and is under increasing pressure from their leaders to come to their assistance in what they say is a decisive time of crisis in their existence. As a result of their conversion to Christianity over centuries these Arabs became isolated within the Arab world since, according to the Islamic identity of religious and political life, Arabs are not fully Arab unless they are Moslems. They were also favoured by European power and influence in the Middle East from the time of the crusades, through colonialism, to the present day. As a result of this Europeanization they became an — often powerful — elite; much of the fratricide in Lebanon is rooted in this.

If — and when — the Holy See becomes convinced that recognition of Israel at the full diplomatic level would put it in a better position to assist the Christian Arab populations — a significant number of whom are also Palestinians — and if it could at the same time convince the moderate Arab states that its role as mediator in any part of the Middle East conflict would be to their advantage (for instance in regard to the city of Jerusalem) it would exchange ambassadors with Israel.

However, the status of Christian Arabs is the real stumbling block. Their world has changed dramatically recently with the rise of religious-political fundamentalism throughout Islam, the power and growth of the Shiites within this movement and the declining position of the Maronite Christians in Lebanon. Representatives of these groups have been increasing pressure on the Vatican to assist them through diplomatic interventions. This sense of urgency was also present in statements by Middle Eastern bishops attending the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops held in Rome in November-December of last year.

During the second half of February President Amin Gemayal of Lebanon, in his capacity as political head of the Lebanese Maronites, had an emergency meeting with John Paul II. He also met with Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, the Secretary of State, and his associate, Archbishop Achille Silvestrini, the Vatican's 'foreign minister'. During the same period Patriarch Maximos V Hakim, head of the Greek Malechite Catholic community which is present in various parts of the Middle East, notably in Syria, Lebanon, Israel and among the Palestinians, also had talks at the Vatican. This was followed soon after by a mission to Syria and Lebanon by Archbishop Silvestrini aimed at bringing about an accord between Christian and Moslem Arabs, but this failed.

In addition to the 'unsettled' nature of Israel's frontiers, the Vatican has long talked about the need for 'internationalization' of Jerusalem as a condition for full recognition because of its religious importance to Jews, Arabs and Christians. It has never spelled out its thinking very clearly. Over the years it has also shifted emphasis from holy sites to religious-nationality populations in Jerusalem. On the day of the Pope's visit to the synagogue, Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, the ranking ecumenical official in the Curia, appeared together with Rabbi Toaff in a television interview conducted by Arrigo Levi, one of Italy's leading international journalists.

No 'internationalization' of Jerusalem but 'internationally guaranteed free access' to different zones of the city, said Cardinal Willebrands, is what the Vatican is now talking about. This is a change. It is also a glimpse of a plan that Vatican diplomats are discussing with Israel and Arab governments which would involve dividing Jerusalem into zones, somewhat the way in which greater London, Paris and New York City are divided into boroughs with their own local administrations. It would also give greater importance to local Arab political leaders in Israel, which is favoured by Premier Shimon Peres. Teddy Kolek, the Mayor of Jerusalem, is said to be among those who support this plan.

The current-re-orientation at the Vatican as regards the Middle East is in line with moves by the governments of Western Europe. The Vatican is drawing away from its diplomatic contacts with the Palestinian Liberation Movement and Yasser Arafat since they appear to be weakened and less able to speak authoritatively for the Palestinians. It is reinforcing its ties with the more moderate Arab states, especially with Egypt and Morocco. Religion and politics may be separate in the eyes of Catholicism but the dynamic between the two is essential to the workings of the Vatican. □

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LETTERS

We didn't forget you, Neville . . .

Stuart Weir, Editor, New Socialist

Miscellany (*NS* 9 May) really shouldn't believe everything in the newspapers, even if it is the *Guardian*. Far from 'someone' forgetting to invite Neville Brody, who's just redesigned *New Socialist*, practically all of us here said at some time, 'Is Neville on the list?' Unfortunately his invitation got lost on its way.

Nor are we half as grand as *Miscellany* supposes. The room and chandeliers came free; the delicious samosas and other grub were donated; and no one in black tie was employed to hand food round. I am puzzled at your hostility to the idea of *New Socialist* trying to win over young people to socialism, and to having fun in Covent Garden. I thought the young fogeys belonged to *The Spectator*.

If they can do it at Dounreay

Jos Gallacher, Lancaster

Jane Dibblin's article (*NS* 9 May) on the public's response to the Chernobyl accident omitted the most significant development in co-operation between the London-based anti-nuclear groups.

Green CND has brought together Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, CND and six other groups under the umbrella of the Dounreay Opposition Groups. Prior to Green CND's efforts only SCRAM was working on the Dounreay issue; Greenpeace prioritised opposition to radioactive discharges, FoE was fighting the waste dumps and Sizewell and CND had just decided that it could not afford to appoint a nuclear power campaigner.

Dounreay Opposition Groups have pushed the issue higher on the agenda of the London groups but there are problems. At its first meeting Dounreay Opposition Groups decided that a full-time campaigner was needed. At its second meeting it was clear that funds for such a worker were not available.

Jane Dibblin is correct to argue that any future Campaign Against Nuclear Power should co-operate rather than compete with existing groups. However, it can be argued that a separate organisation could raise funds from membership, affiliations and donations without competing with other issues in the budgets of environmentalist groups.

With CND forced to consider staff cuts and with existing campaigners overworked, the idea of a separate Campaign Against Nuclear Power requires urgent consideration.

'Softly' attacked by the UDA?

Gavin Esler, Newsnight

I was surprised that your correspondent Fionnuala O Connor can find so little of interest in Belfast these days that she instead attempts a hatchet job on *Newsnight* on the UDA (*NS* 9 May). Among her inaccuracies and examples of chopped logic my two favourites are: her acceptance that the UDA is behind the majority of attacks on police homes and Catholic premises, yet her description of them as 'soft'. I am sure the several hundred families who have been burned out or intimidated would be delighted to discuss with Ms O Connor this particular definition of 'softness'. Secondly she is keen to pretend that *Newsnight* reporters are deluded 'visitors' to Belfast. I moved to London — from Northern Ireland — four years ago. If I'm a visitor, it is here.

Cooley's record on Gadafy

Charles William Maynes, Editor, Foreign Policy

Claudia Wright's suggestion (*NS* 25 April) that John Cooley has inflamed American public opinion against Libya by allegedly calling for Gadafy's 'liquidation' is yellow journalism at its absolute worst. Wright's source for this calumny is a *Washington Star* article dated 8 March 1981, which in turn was adapted from a longer piece on Libya Cooley published in *Foreign Policy*. Nowhere in either article is the word 'liquidation' used. In fact, in both versions of the Cooley article, the author very explicitly states that the 'Gadafy threat does not call for direct military action against Libya.' Wright owes Cooley an apology.

May Day in Red Square

Bill Speirs, Erskine, Scotland

It is a pity that in an otherwise welcome reminder of the history of May Day Stuart Howard (*NS* 2 May) should have unthinkingly repeated the Cold War caricature of May Day in the Soviet Union as being 'the annual chance to spot the latest in Soviet armaments being hauled through Red Square'.

In fact, May Day in the Soviet Union does not involve any parade of armaments; it consists of parades (throughout the USSR, not just in Moscow) of workers and communities, displaying the floats, banners etc which they have put together in preceding months.

May Day in Moscow may not have the spontaneity that we would hope for in a celebration of international workers day, but it is still clearly seen as a day of the workers, not a day of the generals.

The power and the guilt

Francis Oeser, London NW5

War is not just the 'mirror of our sexuality' (*Male* by Kathy Acker *NS* 25 April), but a facilitator of lesser needs. To the soldier or pirate when facing the fear of death, other fears become less insistent, less influential; during life's last chance one does what one really wants, really needs, which may be brutal, selfish, sensual — taking/giving as the infant at the breast. Pirates take what they want (as infants do) and then they live in fear of repercussions. We live in fear of being caught so we do not take what we want, tribal life is such a war on want. We want, and with guilt, and without the act which meets the need. We vibrate with the contradiction of personal and group needs.

Surrealism makes contradiction The Image, and touches that complexity which we shy from today. The ENO's production of Busoni's *Faust* brilliantly explores this as a problem of our time. Kathy Acker, too, deals with one of Faust's three preoccupations, power, in her stunning story.

English socialism is plagued by the contradiction between individual need/expression, and a collective sensibility. Ways to encompass each must be formulated. We in the Labour Party need to understand that there are a number of solutions (probably lots), *many* of which answer the problems of housing, wealth, education, nationality etc. It is only by devising programmes out of complexity and contradiction that the Labour Party can transform Britain out of the disasters of post-modern Victorianism into which we have been plunged. This may not seem 'single-minded' (that myth should be ditched). But the party will be effective.

Take me to your Leader
35
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WELCOME TO OUR EXCLUSIVE COURSE IN PRESENTATION. AS I TALK, MY COLLEAGUE WILL COLLECT THE FEES FOR THE TERM
NOW, AT THE HEART OF THIS PROBLEM OF PRESENTATION IS THE IRRITATING FACT THAT THE PLEBS ARE SUSPICIOUS
EXIT
energy and enterprise
FEES
PRESENTATION IS POWER
WHATEVER TRUTH WE WISH TO CONVEY, BE IT THE MANIFEST CHEAPNESS AND SAFETY OF NUCLEAR POWER, OR THE WISDOM AND ACHIEVEMENT OF THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT, WE MUST FIRST OF ALL APPEAL TO THE GREAT BRITISH VIRTUE OF TRUST
SO LET US BEGIN OUR COURSE WITH THE SORT OF ACT OF TRUST THAT WE WISH TO INSPIRE. I WANT YOU ALL TO SHUT YOUR EYES AND COUNT UP TO A HUNDRED...
THIRTYSIX··THIRTYSEVEN ··THIRTYEIGHT····
EXIT
REV REV RRM
FEES
JOHN MINNION.

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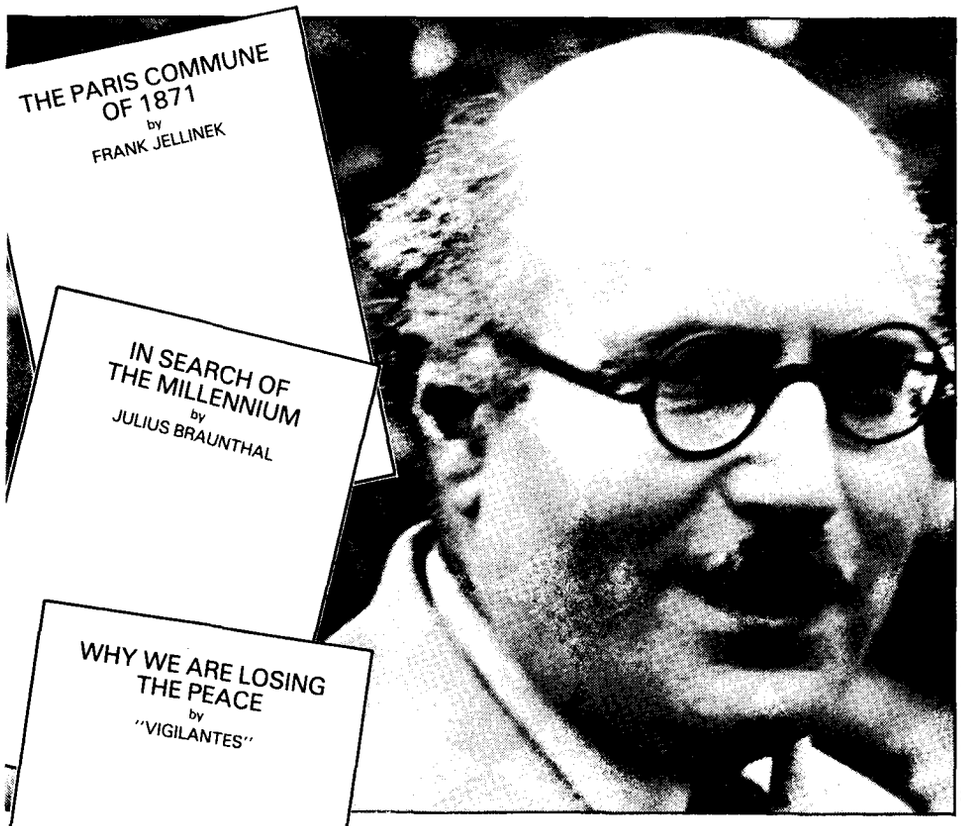

Victor Gollancz Ltd

CLUBS OF THE LEFT

Every socialist home has one (and some have a valuable collection) — the orange-covered books of the Left Book Club. Victor Gollancz (above) started it up 50 years ago this week. IAN HOLM describes what made this first book club such a success

On 29 February 1936 an unusual double-page advertisement appeared in the *New Statesman and Nation*. It was headed 'Important Announcement' and the first paragraph read as follows:

> Messrs Victor Gollancz have organised and will shortly launch The Left Book Club for the service of those who desire to play an intelligent part in the struggle *for* World Peace and a better social and economic order and *against* Fascism.

The advertisement (repeated in the *News Chronicle* a week later) invited the public to send a postcard to the publishers for further details. The response astonished Victor Gollancz. When the first two LBC books were published 50 years ago on 18 May 1936 membership of the Club stood at 9,000. Ten weeks later, it had doubled to 18,000. By December 1936 it had doubled again to 36,000.

The Club was formed by Gollancz following the failure of London publishers a year earlier to support a proposal made by the Communist booksellers, The Workers' Bookshop, to John Strachey for a club which would choose and then offer to its membership suitable left-wing books from any publisher's catalogue. Victor Gollancz, a successful general-list and fiction publisher since 1927, when he founded his own company, was dissatisfied with 'the invisible barrier across which it was almost impossible to get progressive literature into the hands of the general public.'

He invited Strachey and Harold Laski to join him on the Selection Committee. 'Laski', he wrote in the first issue of *The Left Book News* (later *The Left News*), the Club's monthly magazine, 'is a member of the Labour Party: Mr Strachey is in broad sympathy with the aims of the Communist Party: and I am interested in the spreading of all such knowledge and all such ideas as may safeguard peace, combat Fascism and bring nearer the establishment of real Socialism.' The implication, it seems, was that the selectors were a well-balanced trio.

The initial scheme was to commission (or occasionally reprint) and sell to Club members each month for 2/6d (12½p) a book of left-wing interest. However, the immediate success of the Club (the first of its kind in England) led Gollancz to offer members several series of optional choices. In those three hectic pre-war years, the LBC made available thirty-six Additional Books; twenty-five Educational Books; five Pamphlets; five Reprints of Classics; twenty Supplementary Books and eleven Topical Books as well as the obligatory monthly choice.

The books, bound in limp orange cloth covers from September 1936 and dark red boards two years later, were distributed nationally through booksellers. Gollancz could never have afforded the expense of maintaining thousands of small accounts or risk angry booksellers boycotting his general list.

The extraordinary success of the Club owed much to Victor Gollancz's enthusiasm. In 1936 Gollancz, then aged 43, was, according to Strachey, a 'Capitalist and Socialist: man of the world and latter-day saint: Jew and Christian: rationalist and theologian: rebel and traditionalist'. Even his fellow left-wing publishing rival, Frederic Warburg, called him 'the "king-pin" of the cultural and political activities of the United Front, a demon of energy, capable, trustworthy and possessed of so overwhelming a belief in the righteousness of his opinions as to bear a recognisable resemblance to the ancient Hebrew prophets'.

Gollancz wrote the Club's publicity material and bombarded members with recruiting leaflets and potential members with enrolment forms which offered various alternative membership schemes. He encouraged, through *The Left News*, the remarkable growth of local and vocational groups, formed initially to consider the monthly choice, but which often developed

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into general political discussion centres.

Between 1937 and September 1939, he organised a speakers' circuit for some of the best-known Club authors (including Arthur Koestler, JBS Haldane and Konni Zilliacus) to tour England and talk about their books. He also ran major annual rallies in London, which filled the Albert Hall, and dozens of smaller rallies throughout the country. Lloyd George, Laski, Strachey, Aneurin Bevan, Jennie Lee, Stafford Cripps, Harry Pollitt the Communist Party leader, Hewlett Johnson the 'Red' Dean of Canterbury and A S Neill of Summerhill, were among the travelling circus of LBC speakers.

Gollancz's relentless activity does not, of course, by itself explain the growth of the LBC, which peaked at 57,000 members and 1200 different groups in every part of the UK in April 1939. The national and international political climate was, after all, unique in the late 1930s.

In the autumn of 1935 Italy invaded Abyssinia. Six months later, Hitler moved into the Rhineland. The Spanish Civil War began in July 1936 and coincided with the election of Leon Blum's Popular Front Government in France. In Britain, the Jarrow Crusaders were on the march and although the worst years of the Depression may have passed, Stanley Baldwin and (from May 1937) Neville Chamberlain led a National Government which had no effective domestic policy for reducing unemployment or combating poverty and no meaningful foreign policy for opposing Hitler. There was, however, very little parliamentary opposition. Both the Labour and Liberal parties had recently split: both were crushed in the 1935 General Election.

The Left Book Club did not, of course, create these conditions in which an organised extra-parliamentary left-wing cause could flourish, but it did exploit them successfully, to the discomfort of the Labour Party which disapproved of the LBC's acceptance of Communist support.

Between May 1936 and August 1939 the Club published almost 150 different titles. The two most popular subjects were the Soviet Union (15 uncritical volumes published) and the Spanish Civil War (eight books, all endorsing the Republican cause). Some of the more durable selections from these years included an early choice *Walls have Mouths* by Wilfred Macartney (September 1936), a personal account of the horrors of prison life which led to some immediate humane reforms; Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China* (October 1937); David Daiches's *Literature and Society* (January 1938) and, of course, in March 1937, *The Road to Wigan Pier* by George Orwell.

Gollancz published it with a disclamatory preface and subsequently wrote in *Left News*: 'I may confess now that the selectors chose this book with some trepidation, as there was so much in it that they personally found repugnant.' The previous month, Laski had disassociated himself from the book. 'It is, in fact, an emotional plea for socialism, addressed to comfortable people. On the evidence, when the facts make them feel uncomfortable, charity seems to act as a sufficient anodyne. They rarely go further . . . At bottom, I am not sure that Mr Orwell's kind of socialist would be prepared to pay the price of socialism. And I think he would not pay it . . .'

Orwell had his revenge with his next novel and caricatured 'the West Bletchley revolutionaries' at an LBC group discussion in *Coming Up for Air*.

As war became more likely, Victor Gollancz's sense of mission became more urgent and almost desperate. 'I have lived . . .' he later wrote in his autobiography, 'with a horror, the sort of horror that goes about with a man and never leaves him, of two abominations . . . poverty and war'. During the Munich crisis in September 1938, Club members circulated two million copies of his leaflet opposing appeasement. Two months later, eight million more leaflets were despatched on the crisis in Spain. The day after Czechoslovakia was occupied by Hitler in April 1939, half-a-million leaflets arguing for the need for collective security were sent to the local groups for onward distribution.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact of 23 August 1939 and the declaration of the Second World War eleven days later, split the Club selectors. Gollancz and Laski supported the war immediately, but Strachey opposed it for six months, only breaking with the Communists when the Low Countries were invaded. Ironically, the divided leadership led to the Club's first criticism of the Soviet Union, when Leonard Woolf's *Barbarians at the Gate* (November 1939) was published. Woolf resisted Club pressure to soften his attack and his book outraged the influential Communist Club members. Unfortunately for Gollancz, Hewlett Johnson's unrestrained praise of life in the Soviet Union, published the next month as Soviet troops invaded Finland, simply provoked the non-Communist members.

Although the Club lost its central purpose (the prevention of world war) on 3 September 1939, it continued for another nine years as an educational book club, largely shorn of its rallies, seminars and holiday excursions to the USSR for the really committed. It survived resignations from disillusioned members, the disruption of the local groups by call-up into the services and the problems of the erratic distribution of books in wartime. Membership fell to 36,000 in April 1940 and then to 10,000 in December 1941, although the Soviet defence of Stalingrad led to an increase to 18,000 in 1942. The optional series were abandoned and the single monthly choice was now much more likely to reflect the mainstream Labour Party viewpoint than to echo the Communist Party line.

But even before the end of the war, Victor Gollancz was losing interest in the Club. His restless conscience was such that within a few years he would throw his enormous energy into other causes, such as the campaign for the abolition of hanging and CND. *The Left News* was discontinued in March 1947 and the Club's last selection, G D H Cole's *The Meaning of Marxism*, was published in October 1948 with a print run of 6,750.

By then, those causes for which the Club had struggled were either lost or no longer existed. Indeed, the only alliance with the Soviet Union came when the Club had largely lost its Communist members in the middle of a war it had been formed to prevent.

Nevertheless, in a sense the Club was successful. It attracted some of the best writers, most eminent scientists and most respected politicians to its banner and it was a very remarkable publishing phenomenon. It provided valuable and educative literature which was widely read, and which contributed, along with various Penguin titles, to the debate about the nature and expectations of British society after the war. Indeed, many believed that the Club's activities contributed to the Labour Party's victory in 1945 when eleven Labour MPs were returned who were also LBC authors and six, including Clem Attlee, sat in government.

And in the end, although it may well have been largely a middle-class movement which was too closely associated with the Communist Party for its own good and which failed to penetrate the trade unions, or win over the Labour Party until the war began, it remained the only organisation to publish serious left-wing titles in the 1930s.

Some of those titles were appallingly naive (particularly those that described life in the Soviet Union). Some were simply ephemeral and others just boring. But a surprising number were well-researched and remain readable today, and one or two are of enduring value.

While almost every second-hand bookseller has a selection of LBC books with their distinctive Stanley Morrison designed 'bottle-top' badge punched into the front covers, symbolically just left-of-centre, about half a dozen titles are virtually unobtainable today and another 20 are extremely scarce. So although the books only cost 2/6d each, even at the end when this was a wildly uneconomic price, any collector who possesses all 257 titles (including five pamphlets) published by the Left Book Club between May 1936 and October 1948 has a small, if by now somewhat dusty, fortune resting on his or her bookshelves. □

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Hope, regret, or both? Still from Tarkovsky's *Nostalgia*

Landscapes of resistance

Geoff Dyer

Sculpting in Time
ANDREY TARKOVSKY
trans. KITTY HUNTER-BLAIR *Bodley Head*
£14.95 & £7.95

THERE IS A REASONABLY precise relation between power and the nature of the dissent that power breeds against itself. In our century all art has had, implicitly, to be responsive to this fact, either allying itself with power or, increasingly, affirming that which is suppressed and becoming a crystalline form of opposition.

So, in the Soviet Union, the narrow materialism of a leaden bureaucracy has produced, in its greatest artists, an acute faith in the spirit, a sense of mystery that has nothing in common with our own commercially motivated cult of the irrational. One thinks of dancers and musicians, of Solzhenitsyn at his best and of film director Andrey Tarkovsky, creator of *Andrey Rublyov, Solaris, Mirror, Stalker* and *Nostalgia.*

Tarkovsky's career has met with opposition from the Soviet authorities and he has, finally, been forced to leave. Yet art of this kind of greatness could only have been produced within the specific history of his native country. (To be pragmatic for a moment: could he ever have raised the money to make *Andrey Rublyov* here in the West?) *Stalker* is not a film about the Gulag but it is a film which could only have been made as a result of a nation's historical experience of the Gulag.

More broadly, there is a clear line of descent from the ethical imperatives of the great 19th-century novels of Tolstoy and Dostoievsky to Tarkovsky. More broadly still, his films yearn for the stillness and spatial calm of the Russian icons. But Tarkovsky owes his sense of the expressive potential of the cinema (a sense which, he rightly suggests, we are in danger of losing) to the revolutionary film makers of the 1920s. Although there is none of their frantic clamour about Tarkovsky's films (then the stress was on the artist as engineer; Tarkovsky is an artist/philosopher), a 1923 declaration from Vertov — 'My way leads towards the creation of a fresh perception of the world' — could easily be Tarkovsky's.

It is these twin motivations, of reverence and revolution (or, more accurately, the consequences of revolution) that explain one of the most important aspects of Tarkovsky's art: the sense of beauty as a *force:* the casting of the bell in *Andrey Rublyov*, the breeze from nowhere suddenly sweeping across the meadow in *Mirror*, the crippled daughter telepathically moving glass beakers at the end of *Stalker* (the most beautiful and simple image of affirmation in cinema).

It is precisely because of his ability to conjure images like these that *Sculpting in Time* is such a massive disappointment. Put together with the assistance of Olga Surkova from diaries, conversations and lectures, it is a rambling and repetitive assortment of 'reflections on the cinema' — as it is sub-titled with appropriate vagueness. The problem has substantially to do with the style (whether author's or translator's I don't know) of flaccid, archaic chattiness. 'Tender and noble as an actor and as a man,' notes Tarkovsky of a colleague; 'I love him dearly. A serene soul, subtle and with great depths.' 'How true!', 'Indeed!', 'How wonderfully apposite!' are frequent interjections and even when drawn towards weightier matters — 'Why does art exist? Who needs it? Indeed does anybody need it?' — his ideas are developed in an elevated version of the same style:

> Search as a process . . . has the same bearing on the complete work as wandering through the forest with a basket in search of mushrooms has to the basketful of mushrooms when you have found them. Only the latter — the full basket — is a work of art . . .

Elsewhere it's all 'infinite', 'absolute' and 'eternal'; it's also all 'man', 'men', 'he' and 'his' — not a quibble with the copy editor but an indication of something endemic to certain ways of thinking.

Tarkovsky's opinions, too, can lack coherence. 'I believe that sensitivity to art is given a person at birth and depends subsequently on his spiritual growth.' But two pages later: 'Not that the cinema-goer is to be blamed for his poor taste — life doesn't give us all the same opportunities for developing our aesthetic perceptions.' Which is it to be?

There may be little in *Sculpting in Time* to inform or impress, but then print is not Tarkovsky's medium and he is not the first artist to have little illuminating to say about his/her own work. His achievement lies in having created cinema's richest iconography, its deepest exploration of fundamental questions. The level of responsiveness to the world managed in his films is impossible to sustain in real life; any kind of practical activity distracts us from such receptivity but, equally, nothing can deflect us from an elemental recognition of what he shows. This is why his films are both religious and yet can exert such a hold on secular audiences.

Hope so tainted by regret as to be at times almost indistinguishable from it is one of the most authentic expressions of our secular age. The disaster at Chernobyl must have made many who have seen it think of *Stalker* and its two landscapes: the Zone and the sepia-tinted industrial wasteland which, together, worked on us like the memory of a possible future. The oft-remarked historical novelty of our epoch is that our next step into the future may be our last. It is quite possible that we will be the generation to whom it is revealed, as a character in James Thackara's *America's Children* puts it, that there has never been such a thing as progress.

A character in *Solaris* remarks that we never know when we are going to die and because of that we are, at any one moment, immortal. Rain drips in the puddles around Chernobyl; wind ripples across the Ukraine; fragments of *Challenger* lie in weeds on the ocean floor . . . In showing us how much we have lost and how much will always remain beyond our control Tarkovsky reminds us how much we still have to lose. That is why he is a politically necessary artist. □

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Benedict Nightingale

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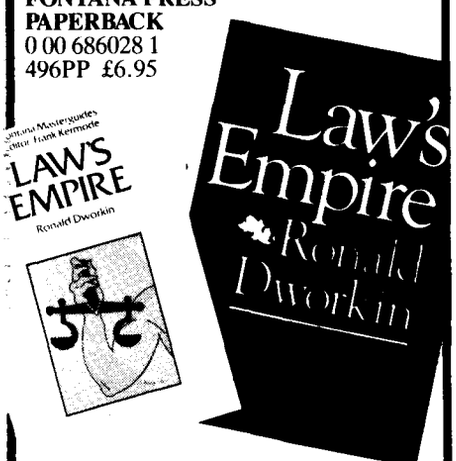

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Behind the stricken-vulture face of the Great Stoic himself, which dourly adorns the front cover, one finds no less than 32 plays, ranging from the 82 pages of *Waiting for Godot* to the one page which describes the 35-second *Breath*, and including several less than familiar even to the cognoscenti. For myself, I knew *Rough for Radio 1* and *Rough for Radio 2*, but not *The Old Tune*, Beckett's adaptation of a Robert Pinget piece about two men garrulously on the brink of senility, nor *Quad* and *Nacht und Träume*, two wordless fragments recently written by him for German TV.

What one notices above all is an astonishing consistency of content, if not of style. The plays have got terser, starker, more visually arresting and (when speech intrudes at all) more verbally beautiful; but their outlook hasn't altered significantly over the years. In *Quad* cowled figures drill their way through what, if I'm correctly interpreting the dauntingly geometric stage directions, are the same intricate patterns on the same tiny square, again and again and again. Weren't the clowns of *Godot* doing more or less that, admittedly very talkatively, over 30 years ago? Weren't they, too, frantically trying to convince themselves there was shape and meaning in their lives and world? And what of Winnie in *Happy Days*, buried first to her waist and then to her neck in sand — and still vainly prattling of love and other such supposed satisfactions? They're all related to one another, cousins in self-deception, helplessness and futility.

Beckett's opinion, evident in play after play, is that humankind has been dumped by powers unknown for reasons inscrutable in a world designed to frustrate and hurt it. Life is a sort of interminable twinkling: subjectively monotonous and boring when not painful, objectively the merest flicker in an endless darkness and, either way, without sense or purpose. 'One day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second,' wailed Pozzo in *Godot* in 1955, 'they give birth astride a grave, the light glimmers an instant, and then it's night once more.' And *Breath* in 1969 made the identical point without a word being spoken: a faint cry, then the sight of a pile of rubble, the sound of lungs slowly inhaling and slowly exhaling, another faint cry, curtain down.

Beckett tends to stay mum about his intentions, but has advised those seeking them to remember two tags. One is from a 17th-century Belgian, Geulincx: 'When you're worth nothing, you want nothing'; the other from the Greek Democritus: 'Nothing is more real than nothing'. In other words, wisdom is to accept your insignificance and learn, not merely to renounce hope and desire, but to become as near to a zero as possible. That was the achievement both of old, blind Hamm in *Endgame* in 1957 and of the old, bleak protagonist of *Rockaby* in 1980. 'Fuck life,'

John Minnion

concluded the latter, having described her disappointments and her gradual adjustment to them, and settled down in her rocking-chair to die; precisely the exemplary resignation Beckett has continued to recommend, implicitly or explicitly, in play after play after play.

Why acclaim as a master someone who has enshrined depression as a philosophy, despair as a moral imperative? That's a question which has sometimes been asked, most recently and combatively by Edward Bond, who thinks the Royal Court should stop performing a dramatist seemingly so hostile to socialist faith and socialist works. But maybe this is to ignore aspects of Beckett which, though not representing any belief in human progress on his part, still display a rare and infectious sensitivity to cruelty and suffering. Think of Pozzo, the bloated landowner tormenting his stricken slave. Think of the arrogant apparatchik in *Catastrophe*, readying his naked, shivering victim for public humiliation. Think of the lonely and abused protagonists of several later plays: the tramp in *That Time*, huddled against bourgeois hostility on doorsteps or in public libraries; the crazed old crone of *Not I*, arrested for incoherently babbling in a municipal loo. For Beckett, all these may be symptoms of divine malice or indifference. We can, if we wish, see them in another and perhaps more positive way, as evidence of a world unnecessarily turned awry.

But does Beckett really need such justification? Do we have to agree with writers in order to appreciate them, or render them ideologically sympathetic before giving them our moral imprimatur? Surely not. In a pluralist theatre there must be a place, to put it no higher, for a playwright of Beckett's monkish integrity of vision and poetic perfection of utterance. Others, too, would agree that a vast, uncaring universe is our momentary habitat — but how many have so unswervingly sought to face out the consequences of that terrible perception? And

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how many have brought such imaginative courage and variety to that task — reducing whole lives to haunted epigrams, tiny litanies of pain and grief, put across by a spotlit head grimacing from beneath a flared mane, or a pair of dementedly gabbling lips, or a grim old woman in black, dying in her rocking-chair? □

M-m-my generation

Paul Binding

The Lamberts: George, Constant & Kit
ANDREW MOTION *Chatto* £13.95

GEORGE LAMBERT (1873-1930), successful enough in England, became the most celebrated painter of post-First World War Australia and an uncrowned king of its artistic establishment. His second son, Constant, earned for himself an eminence among the composers of his generation and virtually created the English Ballet. However, as with his father, his reputation did not rest solely upon works; his bohemian 'Fitzrovian' life-style, his all but ceaseless opinionated talk, his blend of iconoclasm, puckish fantasy and melancholy made him at once a pattern and an arbiter for his age.

His son Christopher (1935-1981) — known as Kit — took some time to find himself and did not possess — in the usual meaning of the phrase — a creative talent. But his was to be the most extraordinary history of the three.

Determined to arrive at some outlet for his considerable ambition and angst, Kit discovered and then managed The Who and started the independent record label Track. His relationship with The Who involved a remarkable degree of imaginative and emotional inter-projection, so that the group's once controversial violence was, among other things, a mirror of their manager's. Like his father's before him, Kit's behaviour and career were seen, even at the time, as a paradigm of what the *Zeitgeist* demanded.

Cock-snooking at the establishment, whose privileges he piratically desired, led to large-scale extravagance and self-indulgence. Protest against narrow reason in the form of drugs turned into addictive abuse, inexorably contributing to what a mourner for Jimmy Hendrix (another of Kit's discoveries) called his 'accidental suicide'.

If George exuded the fat Edwardian-Georgian heyday and Constant encapsulated the febrile Twenties, Kit can represent his own phase of cultural history.

Andrew Motion's fascinating, compulsively readable book attempts three ambitious tasks and succeeds in all of them. First it concerns itself with relationships between generations — between fathers and sons — and in a peculiarly interesting context, at once familial and non-familial. For both George and Constant Lambert were about as little interested in their respective sons as any man could be; there was no room for them in either their exterior or interior lives. Kit was homosexual; his homosexual life would

MICHAEL JOSEPH

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Translated by William Weaver

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appear to have entailed no real relationships, no father- or son-substitutes, just a relentless series of rentboys.

His anti-domestic lifestyle joins him, in Andrew Motion's portrait, to father and grandfather. George's experiences as a war artist in Palestine and Gallipoli confirmed him in his intense boredom with wife and sons; on his return to Australia he liked bluff male company and a socialite's round but avoided any real intimacies and even boasted of the chastity of his life. Constant shied away from relationships with women in his earlier life, though he liked whoring in Toulon. Later came two marriages and many liaisons, but he was perhaps happiest in a pub with men friends of similar dispositions.

Next Andrew Motion is concerned with the art of three men typical in significant ways of their cultures. His apologetics for played works of Constant Lambert (obviously the major figure in the triptych) are extremely sensitive and persuasive, above all for *Summer's Last Will and Testament*. With the achievements of The Who we are all likely to be familiar, but on those too a fresh and illuminating perspective is given. Which brings me to the third task of the book, to show us through three related and representative figures ways in which British culture has evolved this century.

Perhaps the fusion of self-seeking academicism and wilful male chauvinism that informs George Lambert's work now hardly calls for protest. But Constant and Kit and their milieux bring home disquieting truths: Constant seems to embody all too many of the corrosive and inconsistent qualities of Englishmen of his generation.

On the one hand he despised the intellectual as Europe tends to define him/her. In his musical criticism he rejected almost the whole German tradition, dismissed Vaughan Williams and any interest in folk music, found nothing in neo-classical Stravinsky or in Schönberg and his disciples. His interest in politics, ideas, religion, or serious literature seems superficial in the extreme. On the other hand, though he had his own father's flirtation with the bluff, he loathed the humdrum world of families and marriage, regular jobs, civic duties (or indeed any others) and homely, innocent pastimes. So what is left but the sad-hearted cynicism which dissipation and drink feed?

And the sequel to all this can now be increasingly seen as the strange explosion of popular culture in Britain in the late Sixties, in the spheres of rock and fashion. Andrew Motion's book throws considerable light on that process. Anger against the unloving older generation attains that hysterical, cruel frenzy to which we British seem regularly and frighteningly prone but which time and again we deny in ourselves. And the anger also too easily evaporates in us into what can be loosely summed up as 'dandyism', another recurrent British phenomenon.

Andrew Motion writes very well about The Who, their personalities and their arts, but what a cavalcade of *trahison* and destructive indulgence the Sixties British story appears. Like their forebears', the heart wasn't tender enough and the mind insufficiently tough. Somehow a logical end for it all is Kit's Venetian palazzo as described by Andrew Motion, with its vast, ostentatious, squalid, unlovable rooms in one of which a woman, drugged by a suppository, was mutilated when naked and unconscious by bored guests with burning ropes. □

FICTION

Whangdoodles

Glyn Hughes

Gerald's Party
ROBERT COOVER *Heinemann* £9.95
Ransom
JAY McINERNEY *Cape* £9.95
Bright Lights, Big City
JAY McINERNEY *Flamingo* £2.75
The Bay of Silence
LISA ST AUBIN DE TERAN *Cape* £8.95

ROBERT COOVER has an ear for the precise, banal manner in which tragedy strikes:

> She was at the counter, decorating a tray of cold cuts with little sprigs of fresh parsley . . . 'Ros has been murdered,' I said. My wife looked up in alarm . . . 'Oh no! Where — ?'
> 'In the living room,' I said . . .

Gerald is, in more than the sense of pure metaphor, *throwing* a party. From one murder there follow others, the hysterical lover crudely bumped off by the police, etc., and a sequence of unspeakable events, such as a lengthy scene involving mixed sexes in a blocked toilet.

They would be unspeakable, if it were not for Coover's way with them. This is, at the emotional level, to reduce them to crude bestialities. The novel presents itself as a pastiche of the murder mystery, and also as another (yet another) satire on affluent America. What we learn is the sheer vulgarity of great events, at any rate amongst that set:

> '. . . that's my husband's new mistress!'
> 'Oh, I'm sorry — !'
> 'Sorry? What's to be sorry? . . . I mean, what the hell, you can't blame him — who wants to poke his little whangdoodle in me and catch a goddam cancer?'

Coover is an American Angela Carter and she has praised his work highly. What is very good about it is not its adolescent anal-eroticism, but the subtle tracking of its plot among the complex, drunken egos of its contestants. Despite its being an extremely satisfying technical accomplishment, some Leavisite ghost keeps telling me that The Novel should develop a reader's sensitivities, not deaden them with risible comic-strip.

Jay McInerney's 'new' novel, **Ransom**, is the one he abandoned when Raymond Carver tutored him on a writing course at Syracuse University, and which he took up again later, to complete more arduously after he had dashed off the immensely successful **Bright Lights, Big City**, and which is now published in England in an atrociously-covered paperback.

Both novels concern themselves with picaresque adventures through what are usually called 'the underworlds' of great cities, New York in *Bright Lights* . . ., Kyoto in *Ransom*. Kyoto, of course, is the ancient capital of Japan, but McInerney's view of it is entirely modern. It is inhabited by American karate-students, teachers of English, dharma bums seeing 'eternity in a grain of Thai heroin' and by American-inspired Japanese dope-pedlars, karate experts and gangsters. The 'underworld'? For them it is the bourgeois

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conservative voter who lies volcanically under *their* world, liable to explode it, as Ransom's conventional father comes to try and disrupt his son's kharmic, bloody ending.

Both novels are autobiographical and almost plotless. *Ransom* is a relatively sluggish book, specifically in the descriptions of karate, and you can, I think, see where the revisions have taken place, not quite sufficiently to save it, after the author won his black belt as a writer by producing *Bright Lights, Big City* in six weeks. Pages 56-60, for instance, in which Ransom meets Carl Digger, a journalist pursuing a supposed CIA plot to dispose of soldiers who have caught the clap, is a wonderful piece.

McInerney is intermittently perceptive in ways which make the heart leap. 'You will learn to compound happiness out of small increments of mindless pleasure,' he says of his descending New York hedonist in *Bright Lights* . . . But mostly he keeps his novels going by not daring to dwell on anything for too long. (When he does so, as sometimes in the more 'serious' book *Ransom*, the result is leaden.) Or it is through constant wisecracking. This covers some narrative failings, in which characters in their inter-reactions show too little development and too much of stylised macho relationships. He skirts the fuller reasons for why people do what they do. Perhaps this is why McInerney in interview apparently worries about being a 'serious' novelist. His antecedents appear to be Fitzgerald, Lowry (specifically *Under The Volcano*) and Hemingway. *Ransom* and *Bright Lights, Big City* are, like Coover's, boys' own novels, that ignore half of a world of sensibility and leave one entertained, but with the deeper appetites still hungry and unsatisfied. Sliced white macho bread, in the end.

It is here, in the full range of her sensibilities, that Lisa St Aubin de Teran scores. It is a test of a male novelist to write about women, and of a woman to write about men. **The Bay Of Silence** gives alternating accounts by William and Rosalind, and William, for once, is neither feminists' monster nor wimp nor tough guy but a full male sensitive to his travels in the other country of woman.

The two characters are recounting their own versions of Rosalind's schizophrenic breakdown, the division of her mind symbolised by the twin bays of the Italian town where the novel begins and ends. It is a little heavy with symbolism — Angelo, seen only once, haloed in a boat, and Amadeo, 'gift of God', the child whom he perhaps conceives on Rosalind and whom she allows to die.

I say perhaps, for things are none too easy to track. The book generates an oneiric quality which doesn't quite manage to justify the lapses from expected logic and sequence, as for instance when William, discovering 'his' baby dead in its pram, covered in crabs which his legitimate twins have heaped upon it, phones the emergency services, who take no action whatsoever. This is difficult to take in, even in a French seaside town avoided by everyone because of its radiation sickness, a weird parody of Sellafield. With this reservation, I found this a deeply moving novel, that doesn't cover over a novelist's most demanding and important tasks with bluster. □

FILMS

Adventures in the skin trade

John Coleman

Rampling on the rampage . . .

He Died with His Eyes Open (18)
Cannon Premiere
Love Letters (18)
Cannons, Panton Street and Tottenham Court Road
9½ Weeks (18)
ABCs, Shaftesbury Avenue and Fulham Road; Cannon, Haymarket
The Hitcher (18)
Prince Charles; ABCs, Bayswater and Fulham Road; Cannons, Panton Street and Charing Cross Road
Billy the Kid and the Green Baize Vampire (15)
Cannons, Chelsea and Tottenham Court Road

IN A WEEK when knickers are shed like leaves in Vallombrosa, you can bank on it that Charlotte Rampling is starkers beneath her white fur coat in **He Died with His Eyes Open.** Jacques Deray's twisty Parisian entertainment, drawn from a thriller by Derek Raymond (Robin Cook), finds the beady beauty as *je-m'en-foutiste,* bed-hopping Barbara, candidly enigmatic and seducing the police inspector on her case with disrobing ease. But maybe Michel Serrault's magnificently dry, humorous, eccentric and flinty *flic* is as much having as had. By noting that tramps do not wear spats from 'Polly & Son', he has already identified a horribly done-over corpse, dumped on railway waste ground, as a drunken, drop-out classical pianist Charly and learnt from the fellow's widow that she was deserted for a whore called Barbara.

Rapidly installed in Charly's studio, Serrault's Inspector Staniland is listening to his posthumous taped ravings about this 'whore' and one Marc who beat him up and took her away, when Barbara herself makes a cool, mackintoshed entrance — beguilingly out of a Forties Hollywood *film noir,* when rainwear was mandatory for bad girls at some stage of the plot — to declare that *she* killed Charly.

Early days, and Staniland has other suspects (the tipsy, come-hither widow and her drug-involved son among them), other leads (Barbara's burly, meat-market ex-husband; the mysterious Marc) to follow up. Meanwhile, he gradually assumes dead Charly's persona, wondering about the horror he caught in the cadaver's eyes. A glancing shot shows Staniland spatted: then he is wearing more of his clothes, smoking his fags, fooling seriously in tails at his piano, finally accepting her invitation and screwing Barbara, in a saturnine photographer's shower-stall, during a seaside weekend in Cabourg of Proustian memory. Barbara tells conflicting yarns of her Irish girlhood and Marc emerges as her brother: further it would be unfair to go, though the rueful, resolute inspector goes all the way, to a bitter and ruminative end. En route wonderful little touches enliven things: Staniland registering instant blow-ups of his soaked love-making as he leaves that photographer's; Barbara's multi-cuckolded ex

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bluffly admitting his second wife is less fun; the cop being forced by Rampling's amused fatal woman to shout down a phone in a crowded smart bar, *'J'ai envie de te sauter!'* In this tale of two kinds of entrapment it is Serrault's nuanced playing — a small masterpiece of equivocal shading — that quite lifts the spirits.

Jamie Lee Curtis, of whom I am inordinately fond, does as much for Amy Jones's **Love Letters**, in which — as Anna, young classical music DJ for a Southern Californian radio station — she falls head over buttocks for James Keach's older and married Oliver, successful photographer with nice wife and small daughter. That Curtis has a comely built becomes apparent during some steamy beddings, stressed — one hears — at producer Roger Corman's behest. Who's complaining? What matters here is something else: that director-writer Jones, hitherto better known for her sexploitation movie for Corman, *Slumber Party Massacre*, should show finesse, edge, compassion and —above all — control in what could have been the old, novelettish story of The Other Woman, a foredoomed affair. The letters of the title, unearthed by Anna after her mother's death, shakingly prove that mama had a passionate liaison herself when Anna was a child and may go some way towards accounting for papa's lachrymose demands on daughter.

Read voice over, these outpourings sometimes lean into hearts-and-flowers emotionalism but their function is primarily as a spur to Anna's utter surrender to her feelings for 40-year-old Oliver, so that — for all her promises of enjoying the moment — she rejects a better job offer which entails moving away, spies on his wife and kid in a playground, ultimately and wreckingly causes a scene outside his house at night. Visiting her mother's grave at the close, she spots and talks to a gentle, unremarkable, balding man, that past letter-writer. 'She was the love of my life,' he says: we believe him. He asks if Anna has known such love and she wrily says, no: are we to believe *her*? Certainly she'll know other loves, this stormy Anna, whose range of moods — from ecstasy through wild jealousy to despair — so finely fleets across Jamie Lee Curtis's long, expressive face. This is a decent, complex film, with a firm hold on near-incestuous scenes between father and Anna, and excellent support from Keach as the torn man with far more than a bit on the side.

Adrian Lyne, the British director who opened his account with *Foxes* and swelled it with *Flashdance* (hohum), damn near closed it from where I sat with his latest, **9½ Weeks**. Based on a 'sensational autobiographical novel' by Elizabeth McNeill, this soft-porn downer pursues the sexual subjugation and enslavement of Elizabeth, a New York art dealer (attractive Kim Basinger, who deserves better) by commodities broker John (the improbable and smirking Mickey Rourke, who should be so lucky). Love at first smirk for Liz, who's soon being blindfolded, stripped, rubbed with ice cubes and fed an odd mix of foods by her would-be subjugator; then graduating to fucks on tables, up against a wall under a rain-spout and so on. All this is aspiringly rooted in authenticity by lots of

. . . Curtsying Curtis

colourful street shooting. An attempt at eerie gaiety, when John takes her — dressed as a man, with gummed moustache — out to dinner, goes badly adrift, as does a titillating shopping excursion during which John buys a whip. Liz is supposed to get the most stupendous erotic charge out of these and other attentions; and there is, of course, a fascinating movie about an *amour* at once *fou* and *vache* to be made. This ain't it.

The Hitcher: breathtakingly silly and nasty events after lad gives ride to psychopathic killer. Alan Clarke's **Billy the Kid and the Green Baize Vampire**: tacky Brit musical, sub-Weill at very best, about gangsters, fangs and snooker. But now goodbye to all that, constant reader, and thank you for having me. □

Recommended viewing

A regular selection by our critic from films still doing the rounds

Vagabonde Sombre last weeks of slatternly young Mona, hitchhiking, odd-jobbing, sleeping rough and around in wintry South of France. Agnès Varda's best film, with crucial casting of strong-faced Sandrine Bonnaire as graceless vagrant whose doomed journeying inspires envy, fear, curiosity, disgust in assorted witnesses.

A Room with a View Palpable hit by uncommonly literate-visual Ivory-Merchant-Jhabvala trinity, exquisitely matching their meet to Forster's 1908 barbed, poised, pagan and wittily resonant shake-up of class-crossing Edwardian amour, via Florentine trip, for awakened young Lucy (Helena Bonham Carter, Maggie Smith, Denholm Elliott, Daniel Day Lewis).

No Surrender Liverpudlian black stuff, seamed with horror and hilarity, as Alan Bleasdale's vivid OAPs, rival Protestants and Catholics, are misbooked into sleazy, crook-owned club with harassed new manager (Michael Angelis) for New Year's Eve celebrations and confrontations. Peter Smith directs (Bernard Hill, Joanne Whalley, Ray McAnally).

DANCE

Earth and air

Stephanie Jordan

Le Baiser de la Fée and **Anastasia**
Covent Garden
American Dance
Sadler's Wells
New Dance
Watermans Arts Centre

KENNETH MACMILLAN'S revised setting of Stravinsky's ***Le Baiser de la Fée*** reminds us that he has been a choreographer of distinction. Hans Christian Andersen's story of the baby who, as a man, is claimed from his fiancée by the fairy who saved his life provided MacMillan with the theme of respectable, secure, marital love versus the irresistable force of erotic compulsion. Fairy stories are not typical of MacMillan, but the subject is one that ballet can deal with well — and can be a much more telling metaphor for life's adventures than the material that MacMillan has handled more recently.

Here, MacMillan used classical dance language to show the contrast between introversion, earthly burden, and ideals; renewing those streamlined images of a more enticing world obsessively and with increasing passion through to the end of a lengthy apotheosis. The Fairy is an excellent role for Fiona Chadwick, strong and icy and with the suppleness of back for which the original Svetlana Beriosova was famed. Jonathan Cope as the Young Man proves, as he does irregularly, that he is the Royal's most authoritative male dancer since Dowell.

The scenes that involve the Young Man's fiancée are the least successful. The choreography is intriguing, not least because it drops strong hints of Ashton's *The Two Pigeons*, made a year later than MacMillan's first *Baiser de la Fée*, but it doesn't work. Maria Almeida's Fiancée is as yet faceless, her steps too frequently a reminder of the role's creator, Lynn Seymour.

In some of the entanglements of *Baiser de la Fée* are the seeds of what was to go awry in MacMillan's later work. The last act of **Anastasia**, revived by itself, is a clear demonstration of later problems. It's a stuttering series of episodes set around a hospital bed and dealing with Anna Anderson's wild recollections of herself as an exiled Russian Grand Duchess. It shows what happened when MacMillan began to relinquish choreography, destroyed the dignity of the balletic partnership and relied too heavily on the dramatic genius of Seymour to carry his work.

So to the continuing **American Dance** season at Sadler's Wells. The subject matter, at least, of Rosalind Newman and Dancers' programme is bright and varied. *Mirror Lake*

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is a counterpoint of dancers, huge in silhouette or tiny against still more moving images on Pamela Moore's vast, colourful screen. Then there are dancing pairs in *Untitled White* and a crowd of extras recruited for its finale; a touch of political conscience with images of violence in *Free Speech*; and still more jolly duets to anodyne Buddy Holly in *Heartbeat*. The programme adheres to current vogues in contemporary US post-modernism: its speed and zip, its assertive rock accompaniments, its penchant for fine-artist designers. But, while Newman has undoubtedly learnt much from her peers, she hasn't generated a style of her own. Your eye shifts restlessly over the various businesses plotted around the stage, but none of them merits attention. The intended irony of *Free Speech*, with its rapes and knifings, is unconvincing and half-hearted. The dancers are attractive in their dapper outfits, but undistinguished. Newman might be the New York equivalent of our own Janet Smith.

The complications of Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane are involving. They're largely gestural, with piston arms, pumping fists, thrusting finger-tips, a quick grimace: a language of reference, although it often defies logic. It's not a pleasant language (such unrelenting physical tension is hard enough to take) and, with its facetious ballet quotations, its fierce acrobatic stunts and its bound, mechanical rhythms, it makes for inhospitable work. Although, in theory, the statement is vigorous and sound, in the group works on show this sort of dancing is aggravating: an artillery of nonsense, pounding its music into the ground.

The plainer the surroundings the better. I liked Zane's *Continuous Replay*, its framework simply a solo progression along three sides of the stage in a shaft of light. The liveliness comes from its material construction, the continuous replay of the title, with variations and additions, and little softnesses and quirks as enrichment, 'That's all!' shouts Zane half-way along the third side, and what he's done has made sense as dance.

Jones's *Shared Distance* shows the same variety and control in a battle of wits: a couple sparring, getting along and sparring again, going back over the same ground and working their way through a new line of argument. They make an odd pair, Jones seemingly gigantic beside the minute Amy Pivar, but she is a fighter, flying at him and, at one point, not without humour, finding herself atop his head.

The Watermans Arts Centre is the newest local centre to entertain dance in a big way. As a local myself, I popped down to see what was going on during its first dance month and was impressed by the imaginative programming. What these organisers class as **New Dance** — dance that is, according to their slogan, 'breaking out' — includes not only post-modern but Black and Asian forms, new street forms and education programmes: Ballet Rambert's lively schools workshop performance, the introduction of local participants, Alpana Sengupta showing her Watermans pupils in traditional Kathak as well as her own 'Hindi popping'.

The season ended with the Jiving Lindy Hoppers in tandem with London Festival Ballet, the respective dancers and spokesmen/women in lively exchange. They described the two styles, showed their warm-ups, their mistakes and their triumphs and then danced extracts from repertoire. This is proper family entertainment, attracting a packed and enthusiastic audience: reasonably priced; a fast, well-made show; a great opportunity to see a sensational new group and a reminder that ballet can be sensible and progressive without destroying its magic. □

THEATRE

Travesty

Benedict Nightingale

La Cage aux Folles
JERRY HERMAN & HARVEY FIERSTEIN
London Palladium
Two Noble Kinsmen
SHAKESPEARE & FLETCHER *Swan, Stratford*
The Winter's Tale
SHAKESPEARE *Shakespeare Memorial Theatre*
Troilus and Cressida
SHAKESPEARE *Barbican*

FOR A MINUTE or two, **La Cage aux Folles** justifies its glittering pre-publicity. Up goes the curtain on the transvestite nightclub in which the musical is largely set; and there, poised in tiers as if on the branches of a tree, is a wonderfully exotic collection of human butterflies. They turn, show you their multi-coloured female finery, and then boom out in tenor and bass voices, 'We are what we are'. It's a stunning theatrical moment, only to be broken when they begin to roam — and one is comically chewing gum, another leers ostentatiously at the audience and others start behaving in ways that I don't recall in the original Broadway production.

Altogether, it seems a broader, cruder occasion, one that contrives simultaneously to mock and travesty the gay life and sentimentalise and patronise it. Never have I witnessed more squealing, squawking and gratuitous camping-it-up in a theatre than among the chorus of nightclub queens as they flounce off the nightclub stage into the nightclub wings; and the excess doesn't stop there. Two of the leading performers, one female and one male, are so grotesquely over the top they had me turning my head away, partly out of embarrassment, partly in hopes of spotting a male nurse with straitjackets among the St John Ambulance contingent. Why, I wondered, hadn't the producers done what theatrical rumour had suggested they might and cast Bruce Forsyth as one of the two protagonists? That would have unequivocally left us with what the evening seemed perpetually to be becoming, a trad Palladium show packed with horseplay and horse-laughs aimed at those unlucky enough to be sexually different from the straights in the stalls.

That this doesn't happen is due to those actors the producers at least had wisdom enough to select: Denis Quilley, genial and spirited as the nightclub's owner; and George Hearn, funny yet dignified, vulnerable without being wet, sympathetic without becoming mawkish, as his long-time 'wife' and its drag-star. Thanks to the latter, in particular, some good, wry moments survive the show's transplantation from America and vulgarisation in England. The tale involves the efforts of Quilley's son to prevent his putative in-laws discovering the family secrets, and Quilley's attempts to prevent Hearn attending the engagement party, at least in his gay persona; and one won't quickly forget Hearn rehearsing masculine poses in readiness for transformation into the boy's hearty Uncle Al, his big, guileless face crumpling in dismay at the unnaturalness of all that heterosexuality. But the evening's troubles and woes aren't (alas) over. It takes an unacceptably long time for the inevitable confrontation between suburbia and Sodom to arrive and, when it does, it seems witless and unfunny. And then there's the sentimentality and condescension of which I spoke before.

This proceeds partly from everyone's determination not to jolt the audience with too much reality, partly from the crusading aims of Harvey Fierstein, the librettist. His *Torch Song Trilogy* sought to convince waverers that homosexual love could be parental as well as marital, but did so in a somewhat loaded way, by presenting us with a boy magically transformed from delinquent to Osmond-clone after six months of gay foster-fathering. *Cage* allows him to make similar points, but also to succumb to similar errors. Were Darby and Joan ever so devoted, so serene or so sexless as the characters played by Quilley and Hearn? Was any young hero so relentlessly *clean* as their son, with his shiny, smiling face and scrubbed white teeth — not to mention a fiancée who can't make an entrance without twirling like a clockwork top? Seeking to insist on the normality of the homosexual life, Fierstein and his associates have managed to make it abnormal in its blandness. Gay people may well find this even more offensive than the flaunting and wincing with which they're presented at the start.

Actually, the week's most lastingly important event occurred in Stratford: the opening of the Swan. The pine planks and railings of its three-tier, octagonal auditorium have a smart, polished look, giving the impression of an Elizabethan playhouse crossed with the sort of kitchen-diner-living-room one finds in chic conversions in Hampstead or Fulham; its thrust-stage would seem well suited to spare, unfussy revivals of plays of the period for which it's planned, roughly 1550 to 1750; and Barry Kyle's production of **Two Noble Kinsmen**, which falls within those categories, provides as successful a christening-party as one could sensibly have expected.

It's still difficult to spot much either of Shakespeare's mind or of Shakespeare's voice in the adaptation that he and Fletcher are thought to have made of Chaucer's tale of the blood-brothers who become blood-enemies after falling in love with the same princess; but, once the long, slow intro is over, it manages at least to grab and hold those bits of the imagination still able to respond to chivalric doings in vaguely Arthurian places. ▷

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Or, in Kyle's bold transposition of the piece, vaguely *Japanese* places, inhabited by warlords with lank, black hair and samurai with big, deadly swords.

Hugh Quarshie brings suave power to the knightly quarrel, Gerard Murphy a nervier, more febrile charisma. They're both excellent, as is an emotionally and technically agile newcomer called Imogen Stubbs in the taxing role of an Ophelia-surrogate who runs mad for Murphy's body. Meanwhile, I've no space to do much more than note either **The Winter's Tale** next door, a bit of a botchup notwithstanding Jeremy Irons's angry infant of a Leontes and Gillian Barge's fiery-nanny Paulina, or the arrival in London of the **Troilus** I reviewed from Stratford last year. Howard Davies's *fin-de-siècle* production still tends to over-emphasise its intimations of the Great War and the death of a decadent civilisation, but it contains fine performances, not least Juliet Stevenson's Cressida, a forgivably suspicious, wary girl struggling to survive in a bad male world. □

PLANNING

Fallout

Jules Lubbock

EVEN BEFORE his longstanding support for nuclear power became public knowledge in the wake of Chernobyl, the lacklustre performance of Labour's Environment spokesman, Dr John Cunningham, in leading an effective attack on Tory environmental policy was a sore puzzle to me. Even on public housing, where the country faces a £20bn repair bill for the high-rise and systems-built disaster, a conspiracy of silence with the Tories seems to exist: both our parties were to blame — let's say no more.

But, as I argued recently, the Tories alone are to blame. Their Housing Subsidy Act of 1956 enshrined the principle of 'the higher the tower the higher the subsidy' and Keith Joseph sanctioned industrial systems in 1962. Labour is 'Not Guilty' — so why its complicity?

Of course, I was being naive: Tory Ministers were certainly guilty of the policies, but some Labour councillors were guilty of pocketing the payoffs: men like the godfathers of the North East, T. Dan Smith and Andrew Cunningham, jailed in 1974 for corruption. Andrew Cunningham, less of a national figure than Smith, ruled the region through the GMWU, through chairmanship of Durham County Council and membership of Labour's NEC. In return for holidays and a cut-price bungalow in Chester-le-Street he fixed lucrative contracts for architect John Poulson, including some Ronan Point-type flats on Tyneside, which have inflicted years of misery upon their hapless tenants.

Although Alderman Cunningham has been out of power for over a decade his political legacy lingers on in the region with its 15 essential parliamentary seats. Two of his young protegés are now leading labour spokesmen: Giles Radice, at Education, whose nomination in 1973 was wished on the Chester-le-Street constituency by Cunningham,using legitimate tactics (NS 23 Feb 1973); as was the nomination for the safe Whitehaven seat of the Shadow Environment spokesman himself, Dr John Cunningham, Alderman Cunningham's son.

Labour must formulate a viable environmental policy uncontaminated by fallout from its venal past. Where this condition has been met — in authorities like Southwark, whose old Labour cabal was overthrown in 1982, and on the GLC — it has proved possible to bring together community action, housing, the conservation of historic buildings and districts as well as the regeneration of inner city areas.

The GLC bought Courage's bottling site by Southwark Bridge in 1983. Light industrial workshops and sheltered homes are rising there, 18th-century terraces have been restored as public sector homes and new public housing will follow. At Coin Street — where Richard Rogers's Berlin Wall office scheme, given planning permission by the Tories, earned him the soubriquet of the 'Cossack of Coin Street' — work will soon begin on housing co-ops which will restore the residential street pattern of pre-war Waterloo.

These are the fruit of 15 years of unflagging community action; but they are also the harbingers of a tougher new planning policy as well: the Community Areas Policy, CAP, which would forbid all office development within a belt surrounding the central business area of the City and Westminster. To take an example of what this might mean in practice: a planning application for an 800ft. office skyscraper like a giant rocket on its launch pad was recently lodged for a site opposite Aldgate East tube just outside the City in the, till very recently, rotten Labour borough of Tower Hamlets. Predictably, it was praised to the skies (in a manner of speaking) by the Cossack's great fan, the architecture critic of the *Guardian*, Mr Martin Pawley, whose own standards of judgement date from the heyday of quickrise tower blocks. Under the CAP it simply could not be built, and there would be no planning appeal. Perceived land values in the area would drop, the pressure on small businesses would be reduced, the existing residents would be protected, as would the street pattern.

A reasonable objection is to ask where new offices would go instead? George Nicholson, former GLC planning chair behind the CAP, suggests designating commercial areas like La Defense in Paris. I would prefer to restrict offices to the central area by scrapping the absurd plot-ratio limits on the quantity of floorspace which can be built on a given groundplot — currently about fivefold. In place I would reintroduce the pre-War maximum of 100-foot facades. Such buildings provide double the space of skyscrapers.

Here is the basis of a bold new socialist policy for the urban environment at a national level, one that might reasonably be expected from an ambitious shadow minister, as opposed to one who prefers to defend the indefensible. □

MUSIC

Men and machines

Charles Fox

Incus Festival of Improvised Music
Arts Theatre
Notes
DEREK BAILEY *Incus 48*

DUETTING WITH A floppy disk is a craft undreamt of by those musicians who jammed in Kansas City nightspots or around Harlem's Lenox Avenue. Yet George Lewis, who once upon a time sat in Count Basie's brass section, started off the **Incus Festival** on Monday by having a computer respond to his trombone playing. The computer was programmed to react spontaneously, instructing a synthesiser to sound chirpy or Wagnerian, to loose off arpeggios or chime like a frantic clock.

Lewis is used to this kind of thing, keenly aware of the sort of playing the computer enjoys (yes, it does sound pathetically fallacious, but the machine seems to embody a bunch of traits rather than a set of rules). Lewis's way of phrasing, frequently staccato but equally likely to be languid, even romantic, cohered neatly with what the computer had to offer.

More bizarre improvisers faced problems. Barry Guy, alternately attacking and cajoling his double bass, found it hard to have the final note. The computer would come back, demanding a further bout before giving up. On the other hand, a rare moment of tranquility enabled Evan Parker to round things off felicitiously.

Evan Parker's playing, in fact, was the evening's highspot. While his soprano saxophone moved through intricate coils of activity (if anyone has taken Coltrane's methods a step further it must be this extraordinary British saxophonist), there was no doubting that the musician mattered more than the machine. And Parker, of course, along with the guitarist Derek Bailey, founded the Incus record company, dedicated to improvised music, in 1970.

The first Incus release featured those two plus the Dutch percussionist Han Bennink on an LP entitled *The Topography of the Lungs*. The same three musicians, aided by the pianist Misha Mengelberg, will perform at the Festival's closing concert on Sunday 18 May. Others still to be heard from include Alterations, a sometimes joyful, sometimes sardonic mishmash of instruments and styles, sharing Thursday's concert with Derek Bailey and a witty New Yorker (now resident in Japan), John Zorn, adept on woodwinds. Friday finds Zorn and Bailey joined by George Lewis, brandishing only his trombone this time, and the Alexander von Schlippenbach Trio (with Evan Parker), a trio that reappears, together with Han Bennink and Misha

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Mengelberg, on Saturday.

The relationship between improvised music of this sort and those genres customarily accepted as falling inside jazz remains contentious, always good for a broadside from older, more staid jazz buffs. Yet almost every musician taking part in the Incus Festival came up through jazz and still uses instrumental techniques which reflect that background. Listening to this improvising can never be casual: apprehending the form involves relating what happens next to what went before. And, however ostensibly free everything may be in theory, 'wrong' notes and anachronistic phrases — even long, very boring passages — prove that the music is no hit-or-miss affair.

Restraints, indeed, are necessary for any art form that rises above just being self-expression. And a system of restraints — the sound kept deliberately dead-pan, the phrasing austere — makes Derek Bailey one of the most recognisable and original of jazz improvisers. That dryness and obliquity invite comparisons with Chinese calligraphy or Shaker furniture, even with the wiliness of leg-spin bowling. All need putting into service once again in praise of **Notes**, the latest Incus LP, devoted to eight guitar solos. Jimmy Durante gets quoted on the back of the sleeve: 'I put an E with a B and a G with a D and an A and an F. And a B with a C and a G and an E and an F and an A.' What sufficed for the guy who found the lost chord should make do for tomorrow's floppy disks. □

TELEVISION

Words, words

Hugo Williams

RETURNING FROM a word-collecting tour of Australia, *OED* editor Robert Burchfield is stopped by HM Customs and asked to explain his suspiciously heavy suitcases. 'That's a great deal of books for one man to be carrying,' observes the officer. 'Is that normal?' Burchfield explains his mission and offers some samples to prove his legitimacy. 'Did you know that skite meant to boast?' The officer looks dubious and wants to see inside his other case. 'That's a very big book,' he says, turning *S-Z* upside down for enclosures. 'What are you doing with it?' 'It happens to be my book,' says Burchfield. 'I wrote it.'

Back at the office, Robert McCrum is waiting with a film crew to interview Burchfield for **Bookmark** (BBC2). As if to fill in, he asks the lighting man about the special words he uses and receives a snappy dissertation on the need his profession has to avoid insulting the people it is lighting: 'If I say give her a little feather or a little inky, she won't get too upset because she's got bags under eyes.'

Cut to Burchfield who is attempting to engage the only taxi driver in London who doesn't know any rhyming slang in a discussion about words. Did he know they have rhyming slang in Australia? The driver seems to think this was very likely, apples and pears and all that sort of thing. Our peripatetic (means tart in French: *péripateticienne*) lexicographer eventually arrives in the studio and the joke/metaphor is completed with a few token questions about those difficult three and four-letter words: he's restoring the bodily functions and retaining the racial disparagers, he explains. 'Even though they're unpleasant, we have to bring the whole paraphernalia of scholarship to bear to find out where they come from.' I should think that would do the trick nicely.

Appearing on the same bill, A. A. Alvarez had the kind of real-life credibility quotient other people only have in nightmares. It is probably Al's systematic 'risk-taking' enthusiasms — 'I've written a book on suicide and a book on divorce, both of which I've experienced' — that makes you think he must have been a pseud even as a baby. His riskiest exploit to date may have been appearing on *Bookmark*, where he died at least twice.

Alvarez has written a book about life on an oilrig. 'Some quirk of character attracts me to hostile environments . . . poker, fast cars, mountains, I'm not afraid of high rocks, what I mean is, it turns me on, but deep water scares me shitless.' (In prose this came out as, 'Its black depths induce in me a sense of vertigo.') All the more brave of you to go out there and

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face it, we are thinking, but actually this is part of Alvarez's 'extreme experience' theory of writing, the one that kicked Larkin with Hughes in his *The New Poetry*. What interests him is blackness. That's where the men live. 'It's only when you're in trouble that you're in business as a writer,' he grunts. The money must help, but the subject that most attracts him he's not going to be able to do. 'I'd like to go up in the space shuttle, but that's another matter.'

According to Alvarez, the oilfields provide Britain with something it lost when it gave up its colonies: a frontier. A new series of **The World About Us** (BBC2) found perky *Breakfastime* cook Glyn Christian setting sail from Tahiti in a square-rigged schooner 'to discover the truth about his ancestor' on one of the very last of those colonies, Pitcairn. Did Fletcher Christian die in the bloody massacre by disgruntled Polynesians that left only two white men alive, or did he secretly return to live as a fugitive in the Lake District? Someone will ask the same sort of question about Lord Lucan one day and the answer will be just as disappointing. Glyn has to admit that his great-great-great-grandfather is probably buried in an unmarked grave on Pitcairn, but human nature abhors an anti-climax and so this lifetime's voyage rewarded us with an unexpected near-mutiny of its own. As with the original one, it was not over flogging (Glyn's men seemed prepared to put up with that); it was over the appalling conditions and, above all, the food. For the purpose of our film, at least, it was 'an unnerving mirror of the past'.

I especially liked one detail that Glyn came up with, that Bligh had stood all day with his nightshirt caught up in the rope tying his hands together behind his back while Christian decided who should go with him in the long-boat: it has a kind of afterlife of its own which, like its bloody-minded owner, just won't quit.

It seems the present islanders lead a precarious existence scraping a living from gardens, the sea and a postage-stamp trade for which they have little time left. Most ships 'only slow down' nowadays and goods are still let down in baskets from the rare supply ship. 'Be remote or be with it?' asked an islander. 'We can't go back to native style now we have fridges.' As Glyn sailed away he promised to try and do something to help this frail and desultory outpost of just 50 Britishers on the edge of extinction. I suppose his likeable, worrying film is the first fruit of that promise.

I don't suppose it comes as a surprise to anyone that the Church of England is 'a law unto itself' when it comes to flogging off the nation's architectural heritage to the highest bidder. On **World in Action** (ITV) we saw the Church in action as property developer. Unlike the *nouveaux riches*, who buy up stately homes and have them vandalised, weather-beaten and then, if the Planning Dept. still holds out against a business and leisure complex, set light to them, the Church is exempt from planning permission, even when the church in question is listed: the Church Commissioners usually don't even bother to turn up to enquiries. □

In translation

Naseem Khan

I MUST ADMIT that I came to the Tagore Festival with deep trepidation. The image of Rabindranath Tagore is well known: an old man with a white beard and a long robe (no wonder, as Martha Graham once told me, that she'd thought he was God when taken to meet him as a child) and a tendency to write things like, 'Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well. O thou beautiful, there in the nest it is thy love that encloses the soul with colours and sounds and odours.' A lot of that, I thought, would finish me off.

A fatuous thought, as the Tagore Festival — on in various London venues until 25 May* — has proved. Made up of a wide-ranging set of concerts, exhibitions and dance-dramas, the Festival aims, on the 125th anniversary of Tagore's birth, to right his reputation.

Partly, the reputation is Tagore's own fault: his translations, particularly of the songs of the Gitanjali (from which the above quote comes), have presented him as an Edwardian parlour mystic. Also — as Edward Thompson, an early admirer, caustically remarked — the poet came to accept guru status.

But wasn't it hard for him not to? speculated Thompson's son, E. P. Thompson, at the Festival. When Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913, Thompson Senior's letters recorded trainloads of congratulators, many of whom hadn't had a good word to say for him till then, descending on Tagore's Shantiniketan.

But none of this affects the basic fact that Tagore is a larger and more considerable figure, and a potential influence of greater international relevance, than is popularly supposed in the West. His achievements weren't limited to poetry. He was a playwright; a writer of over 2,000 lyrical songs (still immensely popular in Bengal); a short-story writer; a painter. He was, in addition, an agricultural and educational reformer, leaving behind in his university of Visva-Bharati a pattern for humanistically-based education. Dartington College was set up under his influence in 1925 ('You must marry and create some institution of your own,' he told his secretary Leonard Elmhirst firmly, 'preferably in Devon, it is so beautiful'). Meanwhile, at Shantiniketan, the Elmhirst Institute of Community Studies embodies Tagore's ideals of rural democracy and village reconstruction lost, its director considers, in the original Tagorean institute of Sriniketan where academery is now all.

Tagore pioneered linguistic reforms and new developments — away from total adherence to a classical base — in dance and much else. When he died in 1941, his published work — as William Radice, his latest translator, pointed out in the course of a special three-day conference — was eight times the bulk of Milton's. And yet he is hardly known in the West.

Could he be too regional a writer to have any meaning outside Bengal? Certainly, confirmed the conference's chair, Devi Prasad, who'd known Tagore in his youth, he was lionised initially for very partial reasons. In the Nobel days, there'd been a hunger for 'spiritual' writers and Tagore (as well as Romain Rolland) fitted the bill while the fashion lasted. Maybe, speculated Radice in his session, certain types of work are untranslatable — certainly the songs, he considered. For all that, Radice's translations (Penguin, £2.95) are an eye-opener. Gone is the mistiness of the old translations: instead these versions are full of crispness and control, recording not only Tagore's profound feelings for nature but also his awareness of the struggles of the poor.

E.P. Thompson's view, drawn from his father's letters home, was more questioning. Did Tagore succumb to the general air of adulation, as Thompson caustically suspected? Whatever the cause, strain appeared between the two friends when Thompson ('politically tone deaf', according to his son) came back from the war in the Middle East. His book on the poet, designed to act as a 'cultural broker' and rebuild Tagore's reputation in the West, was disliked by the Bengali literati as well as by Tagore himself. Thompson continued on his way 'bumping his books on everyone's corns, as before' but his close friendship with Tagore was over.

People asked at the end of the talk if there wasn't more to this falling-out than a simple matter of two individuals. Certainly, E. P. Thompson agreed, relationships had been 'poisoned by Empire' in those days: the 'Brotherhood of the Mind' had not, in fact, existed. Now things are easier, he thought. But, another man intervened, it would still be rare for an Indian writing on English literature to be taken seriously in England, while an Englishman writing critically on Indian literature would be very much resented. Had things changed that much? 'Categories and stereotypes from the past,' said E. P. Thompson soberly, 'inhibit relationships today. A trite and easy radicalism prevents people seeing the truth of complex relationships. I just feel we are at the beginning of an agenda.'

Prasad, the days' chair, would agree with him. In his view, Tagore is more relevant today than ever: in education ('in crisis everywhere'); in alternative technology; in the ecological and peace movement. But will the message get through? The Festival's events that I went to were full of the converted. Can the old Guru image be breached? □

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Theatre of the absurd

Andrew Lumsden

IN 1897 at the age of 15 Susan Grosvenor, later Lady Tweedsmuir, was forcibly removed by uniformed attendants during a Bayreuth performance of *Parsifal*. The Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove, supposed to hover over the hero Parsifal's head, had descended upside down with its claws in the air. She rightly went into hysterics of laughter. Had the rest of the audience been capable of reacting as naturally there would plainly have been no First World War; for all Germany would have laughed at the Kaiser, himself quite evidently a stage prop the wrong way up.

I have here to propose a *Special Theory of Sacred Drama* and a *General Theory of the Audience*. Each is pathetically simple and could perfectly well be offered in a single sentence. But I have been deeply impressed by the recent example of Dr Roger Scruton's tome *Sexual Desire* and believe that in the interests of my personal reputation, cash flow and agents, and of Western philosophy from Plato onwards, I should bring out a 400-page version in the autumn (Weidenfeld, £18.95). What follows is merely a foretaste.

First the *Special Theory of Sacred Drama*. Cathedrals are much in my thoughts. About a year ago my home phone rang and a Canadian voice enquired whether I'd like an expenses-paid engagement to play the cathedral organ in Toronto. Like a fool I said on the whole not, being so much out of practice that to be truthful I'd never in my life played the instrument. Then, this year, came the Westland shareholders' meeting at the Albert Hall. The next day a colleague at the *NS* gazed at me with admiration: 'Renaissance man . . .' she breathed. She'd overheard a radio announcement that I'd played the Albert Hall organ for the assembled shareholders, *and then heard me play it*.

This required investigation. It turned out that the brilliant young organist of Southwark Cathedral (who did the Westland number) is called Andrew Lumsden. I don't know whether the vestry phone rings with suggestions that Southwark's organist might like to discuss the Gay's the Word case on Channel 4 and, if so, what the bishop makes of it, but I now give fair warning that if I'm offered a fares-paid engagement on the Sydney Opera organ I shall in future accept.

Anyway, cathedrals. I have been giving my attention, as who doesn't, to the problem of declining church attendances. The *Special Theory* proposes that the sacred can only reach its apogee in an atmosphere of the profane. Let preacher, choir and — dare I say it? — organist compete with the lures of folk doing brisk business in transept branches of Boot's and W.H. Smith, Pasolini's *Gospel* on perpetual video in the apse and loft-insulation, woolly sweater, hot-dog, Spud-U-Like and soft drinks stalls in the aisles: dreary reverence will vanish to be replaced by a pin-drop hush when the sacerdotal really works. Let there be dancing in the crypt and beer-gardens beneath the buttresses.

After all, King David bopped naked 'before the Lord'. And I dimly recollect having read that the sometime largest cathedral in Europe, old St Paul's of London (pre-Great Fire), was just such an exuberant hive of socialising and merchandising before it declined into that chilly tomb, the Wren-Wellington monument, St Paul's of today. There should be hucksters turning three-card tricks on the tourists and pavement artists drawing their portraits in chalk by the Lady Chapel.

Now the *General Theory*. I see the Royal Shakespeare Company's latest Romeo, Sean Bean, was quoted last month as saying he doesn't go to the theatre much: 'I don't like having to sit down, not being able to get up for a beer.' *You said it, Sean*. I find it impolite of theatre managements to demand that we sit wedged in rows like schoolchildren or churchgoers. I want to be able to have conversations, move about, eat, drink or pick up a stranger throughout the performance and only desist if the power of the drama forces me. I've seen it done: at 'promenade' productions by the RSC the bee-murmuring, wandering, love-making, kid-minding of the audience did genuinely hush to the famous pin-drop quiet when the action quickened and the tricks of staging, plot-climacterics, verbal splendour overawed us all.

The *General Theory of the Audience* therefore asserts, recalling Susan Grosvenor at Bayreuth, that should a governing system be dead from the neck up the fact will be reflected in theatre audiences dead from the neck in both directions. Take the first night of Peter Shaffer's *Yonadab*, at the National. Shades of King David, it's about the misfortunes of that king's voyeuristic and scantily-remembered junior son. It was apparent to me, and observation suggested it was apparent to everyone there within three-quarters of an hour at most, that this was a turkey. The natural thing wasn't to leave but to give up on the lecture being delivered in the guise of a play — very much in the style of Thatcher's lectures in the guise of government — and move around, buy papers or snacks or drink, talk among ourselves, wonder aloud who Bernard Levin's companion might be . . .

In short, amuse ourselves if the players don't amuse. Instead we sat like dummies, gasping at mediocrity. More profanation all round, please, and less management-dictated deference from the stalls. □

Weekend competition

No 2924 Set by May Day

Margaret Thatcher seems to be acting the heroine in an old musical co-starring Ronald Reagan. A duet for them, to a suitable tune, (max. 12 lines) or an extract of dialogue (max. 120 words) by 29 May please.

No 2921 Set by Maud Gracechurch

Blurbs for famous novels as if written by a leading character therein.

Report By Rosie Hughes

There's been a few sniffles and quivering lips in the Complex this week, I'm afraid: darling Di Dact has received the call to become a 'bare-foot' teacher. Armed with her trusty haversack, a volume of Shakespeare's dramatic works, Russell's *Principia Mathematica*, some chalk and a set of Beacon Readers, she's left us to spread good manners and knowledge across the face of the world. We'll miss her, but your gorgeous blurbs are a lovely, lovely sendoff: a credit to everything she's taught you. A hug and ten pounds to each winner.

Pooh's blurb for Winnie-the-Pooh

This book is about honey mostly. And finding the North Pole and coming downstairs on the back of your head. Oh, and hums. Owl says it is about him. But he can read.

ALISON PRINCE

Mrs Bennett's blurb for Pride and Prejudice

This is the heart-warming story of a mother's love and how it triumphs over adversity to bring happiness to her family. The central character, a mother of five daughters and shamefully neglected by her husband (notably in the matter of his frequent selfish commandeering of the carriage horses for use on the farm), handles the trials and tribulations of her daughters' amorous encounters so adroitly that in the end her eldest daughter becomes engaged to no less a person than Mr Bingley of NETHERFIELD, while her second daughter is contracted to become mistress of PEMBERLEY and TEN THOUSAND POUNDS A YEAR! Just think of it! A house in town and TEN THOUSAND POUNDS A YEAR . . .

NOEL PETTY

Piggy's blurb for Lord of the Flies

Everybody ought to read William Golding's book. Before you can understand it, you need to know the meaning of the title. 'Lord of the Flies' is another name for the devil. This book tells you that there is something bad in people which will come out if you are not careful and do not have proper rules about everything. In the story some boys are on an island. I think some disaster has happened, and they're on their own without any grown-ups to keep them in order. You may not like reading about some of the nasty things that happen, but if people read this book they may be warned and learn how to behave better. I hope so anyway.

KEITH NORMAN

Fagin's blurb for Oliver Twist

This paperback will raise your hackles . . . like plenty! It's about one lonely, altruistic, courageous old kosher-consecrated gentleman's prolonged, but unavailing, attempts to provide job opportunities for unemployed, forgotten, London youngsters, in face of continuing State harassment and interference!

Read how dear little boys, like Master Dodger, unhappily deprived of a thinking parent's care and attention, who otherwise would be roaming London's sinister thoroughfares, and orphaned Oliver Twist, are taken in by the friendly, charitable Fagin . . .

How they're given free board and lodging and encouraged to pick up a rewarding and exciting trade — with no fees or indentitures, either!

Watch how, tragically, the remorseless, withering mitt of Officialdom finally dishes Fagin's noble concept . . . and take warning!

PASCOE POLGLAZE

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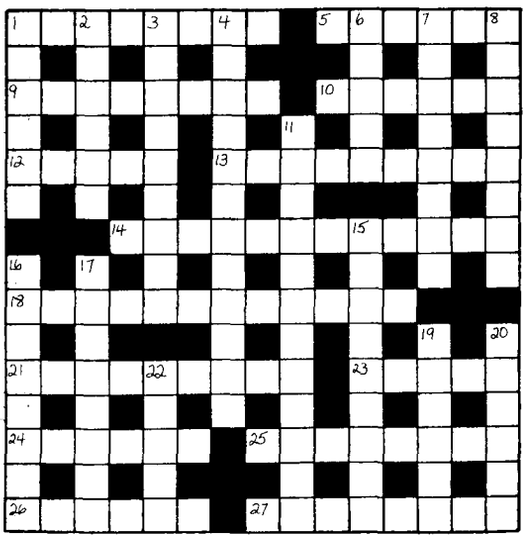
Weekend Crossword 1518

PRIZE: £10 Book Token for the first correct solution opened. Entries to Crossword 1518, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU by first post 27 May.



Name_____

Address_____

ACROSS

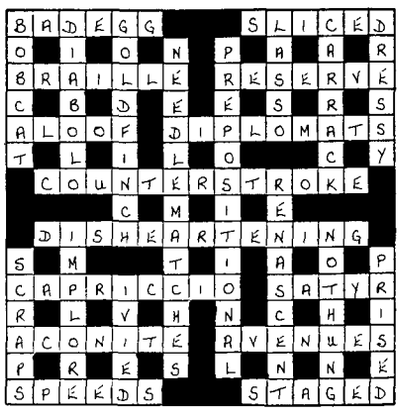
1. The foot a relative has in a home (8)
5. Harm by giving breathing space to a single politician (6)
9. She is slovenly but strict about the unpunctual taking a reduction (8)
10. Woman who lets a liar go free (6)
12. Port suitable for celebrating an honorary degree? (5)
13. It nips her badly, this disease (9)
14. A conventional artist, I celebrate breeding (12)
18. This tragedy seems to make for mortal merriment (12)
21. Woman who keeps company with perverted natures (9)
23. Knowing it would be pointless if there were fighting (5)
24. As a page is missing the story is to do with farming (6)
25. Direction indicator which gives one a blow after one's turn (8)
26. They go out of the theatre (6)
27. One who seeks cunning in a prophet (8)

DOWN

1. Take for granted that the whole lot is put into the turbulent sea (6)
2. Ruffian who discovers an old man in pain (6)
3. A part of Africa includes a number of people before they are born (9)
4. Part of Henry King's meal is on the house? (12)
6. Runner who comes in last has to smile radiantly (5)
7. Place of departure gives publicity to the journey (8)
8. Give out afresh what king does without fool (8)
11. His paper even turns out to be far from easy (12)
15. Northerner puts spirit into mixture of cider (9)
16. Waste away although I got up and had some food (8)
17. If there were no sound the cruel would appear foolish (8)
19. Look inside the cut seen on foot (6)
20. Spirit for a bird (6)
22. In hospital only seen on foot (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1516



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Those interested should write to:

The Company Secretary
New Statesman
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Applicants should provide a CV and may, if they wish, also send in a brief outline of their ideas for the magazine under their editorship. Those who are included on any shortlist for interview will be asked at a later stage to put in a fuller paper setting out their proposals.

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HEARTSEARCH
CONTINUED
ON PAGE 38

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HEARTSEARCH

Cont'd from p.37

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AGENDA

SUN 18 MAY

BANGLADESH SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE. Public Meeting on Bangladesh: After The Cyclone. 11am at Toc H, 38 Newark Street, London E1.

MON 19 MAY

THE FIGHT AGAINST WATER PRIVATISATION. Labour Parliamentary Association meeting, 7.30pm Committee Room 13, House of Commons. Speaker: John Edmunds, Gen Sec. GMBATU.

TUES 20 MAY

WESTERN SAHARA CAMPAIGN. 13th anniversary of Polisario Front. Speakers covering humanitarian, political, diplomatic issues. Report on 10th anniversary of Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic & Campaigning action. 8pm, Holborn Library, Theobalds Road, WC1.

WED 21 MAY

7.30pm CENTRAL LONDON FABIAN SOCIETY. Cole Room, 11 Dartmouth Street, SW1, "After Chernobyl — The Future of Nuclear Power." Speaker and questions. Further details: Elliott Miller 01-673 0467.

LONDON ANTHROPOLOGY SOCIETY. "Burma and the Idea of the Theatre State." Debbie Swallow, V&A Museum. 7pm, Quinton Kynaston School, Marlborough Hill, NW8. Info: 01-354 5505

STAR WARS AND THE ATTACK ON LIBYA, what has happened to the peace process? Public meeting with Dr A. F. Gibson, Richard Ennals, Jo James and Malcolm Harper (UNA). 8pm, Oxford Town Hall. (Oxford CND, 0865 726441).

THURS 22 MAY

FIRST MEETING of Radical Jewish Health Group for Jews in the caring professions. Naomi Dale talking on 'Ethnicity and mental health — where do Jews fit in?' Info. from tel: 01-328 9440.

SAT 24 MAY

"STAR WARS AND EUROPEAN INDEPENDENCE": *Richard Ennals, Salman* Rushdie, E.P. Thompson, Mary Kaldor. Dayschool, 10-5, London. £3 waged, £1.50 unwaged. Details: **END,** 01-272 9092

THURS 29 MAY

PEACE NOW AND THE ISRAELI LEFT. Speaker: Adam Keller of the Progressive List for Peace and Yesh Gvul. 8pm, Lecture Theatre 3B20, King's College, The Strand, WC2. Organised by British Friends of Peace Now. Admission £2 members, £3 non-members, £1 UB40.

SAT 31 MAY

MOVING LEFT FESTIVAL, Loughborough, 31 May. Workshops: Realignment, Leisure, Sexual Politics. Speakers include Martin Jacques and *Stuart Weir. Cabaret, Theatre. St Peter's Centre,* Storer Road. Tel: 0509 262119.

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COURSES

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Printed by Benham & Co Ltd, Sheepen Place, Colchester CO3 3LH. Published by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co. Ltd at 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

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PILLOW TALK
STANLEY GOODMAN
WHY IS IT SUCH A PROBLEM FOR MEN WHEN WOMEN SUGGEST WHAT IT IS WE WANT IN BED?
THE USUAL LEVEL OF PARANOIA I GUESS
THAT'S WHAT I MEAN
MIND YOU BERYL I DON'T KNOW IF SUGGESTING HE TAKES UP THE GUITAR TO IMPROVE FINGER STAMINA IS QUITE THE MOST SUPPORTIVE WAY OF CHANGING HIS HABITS

CHESS

IN THE 1984 USSR v Rest of the World match in London Docklands the Soviet champion for that year was playing on board 10. Judging from the way he performed he should not have been picked at all. Andrei Sokolov lost two games to Torre and looked by far the least reliable member of the Russian side. It was a little early to write off the prospects of a player who had won the World Junior Championship in 1982. But, even allowing for youth (he has just turned twenty-three) and lack of international experience, hardly anybody thought of him as a top GM in the making. When the Montpellier Candidates started last October, so far from being one of the favourites, Sokolov was the lowest rated of all the Russian contenders — indeed, of all the sixteen candidates, only the Canadian, Spraggett, had a lower Elo ranking. Yet Sokolov tied for first place with Yusupov and Vaganian, thus qualifying for the Candidates' semi-finals. But surely that would be the limit of his progress? Not so. He eliminated Vaganian with surprising ease and now goes on to meet Yusupov in the Candidates' final.

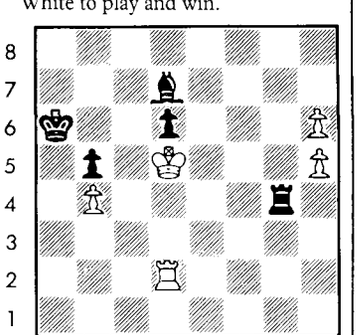
It has to be admitted that both Sokolov and Yusupov have outstripped their Western European rivals. But how is it that Sokolov has suddenly become so much stronger? No doubt Timman and Short would like to know, but I'm afraid I can't enlighten them. What we can do is to identify a crucial moment in Sokolov's advance, which comes in round 7 at Montpellier. At that stage in the tournament the young Russian had done nothing special (4 draws, a loss to Yusupov, and a win against Spraggett). Now he was facing Portisch, one of the top ten players in the world for as long as most of us can remember and a regular qualifier for the Candidates' matches stage of the world championship. Sokolov wins this game, but there were certainly two players in it. Portisch seems to get rather the better of the opening and even wins a pawn. But Sokolov gets open files and an outpost knight as compensation and by move 30 the pressure on the Hungarian's position is uncomfortable:

Sokolov-Portisch, Montpellier 1985, Najdorf Sicilian.
1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. f4 e5 7. Nf3 Nbd7 8. a4 Be7 9. Bc4 0-0 10. Qe2 Qa5 11. Ba2 exf4 12. 0-0 Ne5 13. Bxf4 Ng6 14. Bd2 Qh5 15. Rae1 Bd7 16. Nd4 Qc5 17. Be3 Ng4 18. Nd5 Nxe3 19. Qxe3 Bg5 20. Qxg5 Qxd4 + 21. Rf2 Rae8 22. Raf1 Rxe4 23. c3 Qa7 24. a5 Be6 25. Qd2 Re5 26. b4 Qb8 27. Nb6 Qc7 28. Bxe6 fxe6 29. Rxf8 + Nxf8 30. c4 Nd7? It's understandable that he should want to eliminate the annoying Nb6, but this is the decisive error. Black has problems over how to meet Rd1 followed by Qxd6, after which he would also be in danger of losing the b7 pawn. I think Portisch could have held his position together with 30 . . . Qc6, intending 31. Rd1 Qe4! with counterplay. **31. c5! Nxb6** 31 . . . d5 allows the neat variation 32. Qf4 Nf6 33. Nd7!. **32. cxb6! Qd8 33. Qc2 h6** Sokolov's point is that the b7 pawn is indefensible. **34. Qc7 Qh4 35. Qxb7 Qd4 + 36. Kh1 Qc4 37. Qf7 + Kh7 38. h3 Rb5 39. Rf4 Qe2 40. Rg4 Qe1 + 41. Kh2 Rg5 42. Rxg5 hxg5 43. Qh5 + Kg8 44. Qe8 + Kh7 45. Qh5 + Kg8 46. Qg4 Qe5 + 47. Qg3 Qd5 48. b5!** This echo of his 31st move on the theme of the power of the passed pawn makes an appropriate conclusion. **Qxb5 49. Qxd6 e5 50. Qc7 Qxa5 51. Qc8 + Kh7 52. b7 Qb4 53. b8 = Q Qf4 + 54. Kg1 Qd4 + 55. Kh1 1-0.**

This loss may well prove to be a turning point in Portisch's career too. In his case a down-turn, with his failure at Montpellier signalling the end of his long-running effort to challenge for the world title.

Problem

White to play and win.



Solution

1. h7! Rg5 + 2. Kxd6 Rxh5 3. Kc7! Be6 4. Kb8 Bd5 Otherwise 5. Rd6 is mate. **5. Rxd5 Rxd5 6. h8 = R!** But not 6. h8 = Q? Rd8 + ! 7. Qxd8 stalemate. **Rd6 7. Kc7** and either mates or wins the rook. Vintage 1924 wizardry by Troitsky.

George Botterill

New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU
Tel: 01-253 2001/Editorial: 01-253 2003
Telex: 28449/Cables: Newstat, London EC1
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Published and distributed by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co Ltd

Editor: Hugh Stephenson; **Deputy Editor:** Sarah Benton; **News Editor:** Andrew Lumsden; **Editorial staff:** Duncan Campbell, Jane Dibblin, Rob Edwards (Scotland), Patrick Forbes, Peter Kellner (Political editor), John Rentoul, Claudia Wright (Washington); **Books & Arts Editor:** Harriett Gilbert, **Deputy Books & Arts Editor:** Malcolm Imrie; **Poetry Editor:** Hugo Williams; **Production Manager:** Joanne Hurst; **Layout & design:** Vicky Hutchings; **Editorial Assistant:** Jane Thomas

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Subscription rates: UK & Eire £37; Europe (air mail only £41; rest of world: air speeded £41; air mail £52. USA: air speeded $62; air mail $83. Canada: air speeded Can $72; air mail Can $97.

Second class postage paid at New York, NY USPS 382260. Air freight in US by Speedimpex USA Inc. (US Postmaster: Address changes should be sent to New Statesman, Speedimpex USA Inc., 45-45 39th Street, Long Island City, NY 11104)

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'Passengers are requested not to join the train arriving on platform 4 which might transpire not to be the 16.30 to Ipswich'. — *Announcement at Cambridge BR Station* (Dr A. G. Cohn)

The other day he tabled a motion in the Commons cataloguing West Country train delays and suggesting 'that each Western region train should be issued with a plastic cow to be placed in front of the engine, thus preserving the time-honoured excuse for Devonshire delays that there is a cow on the line .'— *Daily Telegraph* (George Moor)

Burglars are flocking to a South London housing estate because council glaziers put in dozens of windows using putty that can take 10 years to set. — *The Standard* (George Moor)

Four computer terminals were stolen yesterday from the rates department at Hammersmith and Fulham town hall in West London. A council official said: 'The rates bills have already gone out so the theft should not make much difference.' — Daily Telegraph (Mr W. Pugh)

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